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*Official Records*

**65**th plenary meeting
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New York

*President:* Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Odlum (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

**Agenda item 23 (*continued*)**

**Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/697 and Add.1)**

**Note by the Secretariat (A/50/271)**

**Mr. Alhadad** (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of my delegation, our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on this important agenda item. I would also like to thank the representative of the Philippines for her clear statement on behalf of the Group of 77 on this item, which indeed reflects the basic views of my delegation.

The revitalization of the role of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres is, as my delegation has long emphasized, a top priority. We are challenged to rebuild the stature of the Organization, reassess its mandate and equip the international community with an adequate and democratic mechanism for tackling difficult development challenges in the years ahead.

However, as the process has continued, it has become obvious that efforts are being made by certain countries to shift the role of the United Nations in the development field to other economic institutions outside the Organization. This development in particular has become one of major concern to the developing countries, for it threatens the very efficacy of the United Nations and could undermine its efforts to promote the global economy and the international economic relations that are so vitally important to their development process.

Vesting increased power and influence in these institutions, in which all countries are not equal in the decision-making process, is bound to have serious economic consequences. Furthermore, few will disagree that in recent years it has become clear that national and international approaches to the development process are being undermined, or at least vastly modified, by many new approaches. The argument behind these approaches is essentially that development efforts are best left to market forces and mechanisms, as well as to private initiatives, which leaves Governments with only a minimal role to play.

While we can certainly acknowledge the importance of the private sector's involvement in the development field, many of the new approaches have led to the perception that there is less of a role for the inclusion and coordination of traditional development issues within the framework of the United Nations. Thus, the notion has emerged that the United Nations has little or no comparative advantage in dealing with development issues

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and that its role and functions should be revalued and reduced accordingly.

Given such negative trends, my delegation attaches great importance to the discussion on restructuring and revitalization. The central purpose of the restructuring exercise, as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 45/177, was to ensure the more effective and efficient functioning of the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. This should also help the Organization in responding to the need for enhancing international cooperation for development. Moreover, the efforts to strengthen this unique and paramount role of the United Nations have become, as we are reminded in resolution 48/162, even more imperative in the present context of rapidly changing times and the transformation of global relationships. Our basic challenge at this fiftieth session of the General Assembly is therefore to review the implementation of resolutions 48/162 and 45/177 for the purpose of enhancing the role of the United Nations in the economic and social fields in order to promote international cooperation for development.

In this exercise of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations, one must bear in mind the unique characteristics of the United Nations system, including its democratic principle of equal representation. In this respect, it would be regrettable if in the conduct of the exercise such principles were ignored and if it were directed by the views of only a very few countries.

It has long been an assumption of my delegation that in order to successfully restructure and revitalize the United Nations, which is characterized by its universality and neutrality, the options and positions of all its Member States should be fully taken into consideration. In this way, all Member States would have a sense of ownership and belonging, which would contribute greatly towards strengthening the Organization.

On the other hand, however, I believe that if the voices of only a few countries are heard, such a process would prove to be counterproductive. It is well recognized that certain countries can have an undue influence in persuading others to accept their arguments; such a situation can easily undermine the feeling of being in the same boat with the same captain and charting the future course of the world economy and global economic relations for the well-being of all.

When we adopted resolution 48/162, we did so in the full understanding and hope that all its provisions would be fully implemented in the spirit of partnership. In the initial stages of implementation our hopes ran high, as steps were indeed being taken to improve the working relationship between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies, thus enhancing their complementarity.

As to the framework of the General Assembly, we welcome the fact that the agenda and discussions of the Second Committee have been streamlined and strengthened so as to sharpen the focus of the Committee, as well as that of the General Assembly as the highest intergovernmental deliberative mechanism of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

In the framework of the Economic and Social Council, the method of work has been agreed upon and implemented to ensure that economic and social issues are addressed in the most comprehensive sense of the term, as mandated in the Charter. Steps are also being considered to establish working procedures within the functional commissions to ensure that their work programmes complement each other in their quest to implement the agreements and commitments adopted at recent United Nations conferences.

Needless to say, within the context of funds and programmes, Member States are also working hard to devise a working method that will fit the functions for which they are responsible in the provision of intergovernmental support and supervision of the activities of each fund and programme, in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the Assembly and the Council.

Consequently, I would not hesitate to add that in these institutional aspects there is obviously a deep commitment to implement the provisions of resolution 48/162. Though a number of steps may still be required to improve the coherence of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, as well as that of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, my delegation is convinced that we are moving in the right direction.

Having said that, I am sure the Assembly will agree that most of the developing countries are deeply disappointed by the results of the consultations on new modalities for funding operational activities for development. Such consultations constitute an important element of consensus resolution 48/162, the provisions of

which obviously imply that, as part of the overall reform process, there is a dire need for a substantial increase in the resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis. However, the consultations spanning the last two years have not attracted the necessary political willingness and have thus achieved no substantive progress. Inevitably, therefore, the developing countries will continue to be impaired by the expected cutbacks in the resources for operational activities for development. This situation is certainly detrimental to the prospects of achieving our objectives in the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations role in the economic, social and related fields.

Resolution 48/162, including its annex, is an integrated resolution which requires the full implementation of all its provisions without exception. The selective implementation of its provisions would, we believe, be counterproductive and contrary to the spirit of the resolution.

While my delegation is fully committed to participating actively and constructively in future consultations on new modalities for funding for operational activities for development, we believe that what is now crucial is the political will and determination of all parties on how best to arrest the downward spiral of resources for development. I should mention in this context that the developing countries have kept their side of the partnership agreement in resolution 48/162, but, regrettably, a *quid pro quo* in terms of funding has not been forthcoming from our developed partners. We could agree that any new funding system that may be devised should facilitate all participants' demonstrating their commitments to the programmes and funds and should ensure the predictability and continuity of such resources, in keeping with the spirit of resolution 48/162. One such system that should be explored, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, is that of multi-year negotiated pledges. Obviously, such exploration should not preclude a vigorous search for other options. We trust that the next round of consultations will seriously address and focus on various options for funding.

In conclusion, while my delegation has focused mainly on resolution 48/162, we should not let this opportunity go by without offering a few brief comments on the need for cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. We strongly support the efforts to increase the coherence and coordination between the work and activities of the United Nations and those of the Bretton Woods institutions. I would therefore like to stress that, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, the United Nations was always intended to play a holistic, over arching role in the economic, social and humanitarian fields. We cannot deny that this would certainly include the activities of the Bretton Woods institutions. Indeed, from the very beginning, the Bretton Woods institutions were supposed to be fully coordinated with the United Nations orbit of activity. But, in reality, they have drifted further away from the Organization's influence, keeping their distance, as it were, from the United Nations. As a result, the United Nations has had little or no direct impact on the policies and activities of these institutions. In my delegation's view, if we are to achieve success in our efforts to restructure and revitalize the United Nations role in the economic, social and related fields, our ultimate objective should be to bring the Bretton Woods institutions into line with the policies of the United Nations system, thereby strengthening their universality and equitable representation.

Realistically speaking, within the context of institutional reforms, the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations could enhance their cooperation by increasing the number of relevant briefings and reports presented by the Bretton Woods institutions, especially in the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. This input could then become part and parcel of the ongoing intergovernmental deliberations. Obviously, as already suggested by the Group of 77, such reports could be discussed during the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. I should add that no matter what mechanism is utilized for these purposes, the point remains that increased cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions is not only timely and valid, it is also clearly imperative.

**Mr. Cassar** (Malta): The international tension emanating from armed conflict, economic imbalances and social dislocation, so evident in recent years, has demonstrated that global economic and social development should constitute ends in themselves in the furtherance of international peace and security for all States, nations and peoples. Committed reform and revitalization of the United Nations system is a prerequisite for the attainment of this objective.

Reform of the United Nations is of the utmost urgency, given the negative public perceptions of its credibility and viability. Criticism is perhaps unjustified when we consider the increasing complexity of issues demanding attention from the Organization. The United Nations is clearly lacking the resources to perform its

assigned tasks. Yet demands for immediate, result-oriented action are increasing daily. The expectations of Governments and peoples alike are rising concurrently. However, pressures to deliver compounded by overlapping mandates, operational and structural duplication and fragmentation, a divergence between national and global interests and priorities and a reluctance by some to alter the prevailing *modus operandi*.

The peoples that have for so long aspired to live in peace, freedom, prosperity and dignity justifiably demand to reap the peace dividend.

A conceptual rethinking of the notion of international security, which is multidimensional and indivisible, has influenced our times.

A comprehensive redefinition of the roles of, and the relationship between, all the United Nations principal organs, subsidiary bodies and specialized agencies, has been recognized as fundamental. The overall process of restructuring and revitalization being undertaken is crucial. Otherwise we would risk condemning the United Nations to death by irrelevance.

Reforming the United Nations to make it both more efficient and relevant to contemporary realities and needs calls for a balanced and complementary working relationship within the broader institutional framework of the United Nations system. Presiding over the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, immediately after the end of the cold war, Malta's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor Guido de Marco, stressed that successful reform of the United Nations system has to be conceptual, structural and operational.

My delegation therefore appreciates and acknowledges the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General in responding to the mandate in resolution 45/264 in this regard. The Secretary-General's report under consideration reflects the commendable efforts undertaken so far by the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies and specialized agencies to harmonize and integrate their operational and procedural activities. The recommendations being made within the framework of the agenda for development, including the coordination of the common themes of the major international conferences, are clearly a major step forward in ensuring the effectiveness of the United Nations. My delegation particularly welcomes the priority given by the Economic and Social Council and the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development to strengthen the relationship between the Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

There is still much scope and need for increased and improved coordination and complementarity between the various United Nations programmes and funds with overlapping mandates at the field and country levels. A rational division of labour should be pursued to avoid duplication and waste. Member States must guarantee a financially viable United Nations. Concerted efforts must also continue to be made to coordinate national and multilateral development strategies in order to achieve genuine international cooperation and partnership in development. The role of the Economic and Social Council as the leading coordinating and policy-integrating body of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields, as originally intended in the Charter, must be strengthened. This entails a reassessment and rationalization of its working relationship with the General Assembly if duplication of work and multiple consideration of similar issues is to be avoided, and the Organization's cost-effectiveness and efficacy is to increase.

A holistic and comprehensive approach to development cannot ignore the issue of environmental security. Our commitment to reform must therefore also include consideration of the workings of our Organization in this field. We are concerned about the current lack of coordination between respective organs which deal with closely related environmental problems but which continue to work independently despite their overlapping mandates. Though each aspect requires specific attention, the intrinsic linkage between these different issues demands unison in effort if we are to ensure a world that is environmentally safe and sustainable.

My Government is of the firm belief that the process of introspection and deliberation should move constructively to a process of committed implementation and action. The momentum of reform generated by changes in the international system over the last five years must not be allowed to lose ground. The complexity of contemporary economic, social and environmental problems requires solutions stemming from an innovative, yet pragmatic approach. We must continue to build onto the structures we have inherited while implementing change at the same time. Continuity does not preclude change. Change is often a painful process but it is change that has motivated human endeavour and achievement. The challenges ahead of us are enormous. But with our collective commitment to reform, the United

Nations can really succeed in fulfilling the aspirations of all men and women, of present and future generations, to live in peace, freedom and dignity.

By responding to the challenge of change with genuine political courage and conviction we can truly build a second-generation United Nations — a second-generation United Nations that is flexible, relevant, efficient and credible and that carries within it the continuity of the vision of our founding fathers to create the conditions for international peace and security.

**Mr. Koe Ntonga** (Cameroon)(*interpretation from French*): The proposed restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social and related fields, item 23 of our agenda, will rank among the decisions testifying to the wise desire of the Member States to adapt the Organization to the world's geopolitical and social and economic context.

The decision to engage in restructuring and revitalization is part of an overall policy initiated some years ago at all levels by the General Assembly to enable the Organization to respond better to the strategic objectives and imperatives defined by the Member States.

Indeed, 50 years after its founding, and facing the continuing economic and financial crisis that gravely undermines individual and collective development efforts and is a destabilizing factor for young States and for international peace and security, the United Nations is duty-bound to play a more active, indeed a central, role in promoting economic, social and cultural cooperation in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

As His Excellency Mr. Ferdinand-Leopold Oyono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, stated in his address on 5 October of this year during the Assembly's general debate:

> "Development is primarily the responsibility of the States and the peoples concerned. Cameroon nevertheless believes that the United Nations should, because of its universality and in the best interest of the international community as a whole, help to ensure global solidarity and interdependence with a view to promoting development for all." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 21st Meeting, p. 21).*

My delegation consequently would like to reaffirm Cameroon's unreserved support for the decision on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields, not only because of its relevance to the present trend towards reform, but also because, from the point of view of the Government of Cameroon, economic and development issues have, indeed must have, the same priority as political and peace-keeping issues, to which they are directly and inextricably linked.

The Secretary-General, in his report of 6 May 1994 on An Agenda for Development noted:

> "Development is a fundamental human right. Development is the most secure basis for peace." *(A/48/935, para. 3)*

My delegation pays tribute to the Secretary-General and to the Chairman of the consultation process on prospective new modalities for funding operational activities for development, whose excellent reports offer a comprehensive but also detailed understanding of the question, making it possible to identify the main problems posed by the inevitable, though lengthy and arduous, carrying out this undertaking.

A member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, Cameroon, a middle-income country, has in the past few years accepted and implemented structural adjustment programmes set up with the assistance of international financial institutions and donors from the wealthier countries. Though it bears a heavy debt burden, Cameroon endorses, and has actively contributed to, the views and proposals of these various parties on the subject of restructuring.

Cameroon considers the following aspects to be indispensable factors that contribute to, facilitate and ensure the success of the proposed restructuring and revitalization.

First and foremost, resources must be mobilized to fund operational activities for development.It is a truism to say that without the financial resources that are the backbone of the process, the United Nations will not be able to undertake and discharge the mission of economic, social and cultural development and progress assigned to it. Moreover, the Chairman's report (A/50/271) on new modalities for the funding of operational activities for development and the declaration of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Group of 77, adopted at their ninetieth annual meeting, held in

New York on 29 September last, emphasize that these resources should be allocated by donors on a continuous, predictable and secure basis. Unfortunately, we have witnessed in the last few years a continuous erosion of official development assistance and of private investment, which could have enabled the various organs of the United Nations and recipient countries to implement the proposed development programmes. In addition, we cannot but deplore the reduction in United Nations budgetary resources earmarked for international cooperation programmes for development.

Likewise, there is an urgent need to stabilize the financial situation of the Organization through the payment of contributions and arrears by all Member States. For its part, and despite its difficult economic and financial conditions, Cameroon, like other developing countries and African ones in particular, confirming its political will and joining in the expansion of the lofty ideals of the United Nations, recently paid up nearly all its arrears in contributions due the Organization.

Because of the economic difficulties that I have referred to, priority should be given to the critical economic situation of Africa and to an increase in budgetary resources earmarked for the "45 Africa" programmes and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, whose relevance and urgency which have been recognized by all. Greater budgetary resources should therefore be mandated by the General Assembly to ensuring the implementation of these programmes, thereby contributing to the development of the continent.

In the view of my delegation, good management and working methods on the part of the various United Nations organs and agencies dealing specifically with economic and development issues are a guarantee of the success of efforts to restructure and revitalize the Organization.

The adoption and future implementation of the prototype for the new format of the medium-term plan for the period 1998 to 2001, the introduction of a transparent and efficient system of accountability and responsibility, and the decentralization of regional economic commissions and of social and economic activities: all these are reform measures that foster administrative and financial efficiency in the Organization in the economic and social spheres.

But the structures created can be only as good as the people put in charge of them. Therefore we are in favour of a Secretariat equipped with adequate structures and a qualified staff that reflects the diversity and rich experience of the peoples of the United Nations.

Moreover, the General Assembly, in my delegation's view, should continue to be the driving force and a global forum for the expression and harmonization of the positions of Member States, in particular in the sphere of promoting economic, social and cultural cooperation, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter.

Finally, Cameroon remains convinced that the ongoing reform of the various Executive Boards should be conducted so as to reconcile the requirement of effectiveness with the imperative of democratization, while at all times bearing in mind the threefold concern of non-conditionality, transparency and neutrality which underpins operational activities for development within the United Nations system.

**Mr. Fowler** (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): The text of my statement that will be circulated to Members this afternoon will be more complete than the version I will present now.

Canada believes that a healthy United Nations is essential to a world in which international stability and sustainable development reign. The importance we attach to the United Nations is the very reason why we are so keenly interested in the renewal of the United Nations system. We want to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization and better prepare it to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Rarely has this issue seemed so pertinent to Canada as it does now. Rarely also have the prospects for agreement on change, based on common goals, seemed so favourable.

Canada considers it important that the United Nations system operate cost-effectively in the economic and social fields, for a number of reasons. We are living in an era of interdependence, our futures are intertwined, and environmental preoccupations are more than ever determining factors in the security and well-being of peoples. It is therefore important to have effective multilateral institutions. The challenge, of course, is to adapt our institutions to future needs and to chart a course for the future that builds on our assets and fosters partnerships that can better harness the considerable capacities that have been developed in other organizations. Our objective is to increase the relevance and the credibility of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors by enhancing its effectiveness.

On this fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, there are ample opportunities for renewal. We should build on them all. I have in mind the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women; the Agenda for Development; and consideration by the High-Level Open-Ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System of a series of proposals on reform and renewal. Despite the array of mechanisms for considering the potential for change, each is not an isolated track. The initiatives I have just mentioned should instead complement each other in shaping a coherent view of how the United Nations can better respond to the expectations of the international community. In the present context, the present debate on revitalization can make a particular contribution by affording us the opportunity to consider how the Economic and Social Council can discharge its responsibilities more effectively.

(*Spoke in English*)

The economic and social agenda is long and complicated. More than ever before, the activities of the United Nations must be more clearly focused and effectively interconnected with other parts of the system. In our view, the Economic and Social Council must evolve into the body primarily responsible for putting this coordination into practice. This is the role that was envisaged for it in the United Nations Charter 50 years ago. This evolution of the Council will be brought about only with a number of modifications and additions. First, we need to examine the functioning of the Council's substantive session. Each piece of the United Nations system must have a distinct role. Functional commissions were designed to be centres of oversight and direction. Specialized agencies can offer opportunities for norm-setting. The General Assembly is the ultimate authority on policy, while major conferences contribute to policy development. Given these realities, the natural role of the Economic and Social Council is that of coordinator. And coordination should be its overarching objective. The Council should provide the United Nations system with cross-sectoral coordination and overall guidance for operational activities, including the setting of objectives and the establishment of priorities and strategies across the system.

The structure of the sessions of the Economic and Social Council needs to be revisited in keeping with this objective of coordination. The high-level segment must address emerging issues of significance in the economic and social fields. The objective should be to identify important areas of work and issues on which greater coordination is required. The Council can also benefit from the insights offered by the Bretton Woods and multilateral-trade institutions. In order for the policy exchange to be meaningful, themes should be of broad interest and should be selected on the basis of appropriate consultations. And, we should ensure that the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General see that the governing bodies of these institutions are made fully cognizant of emerging conclusions, in order that they might play their full part in follow-up activities.

The bulk of the time of the Economic and Social Council should be spent in the coordination and operational-activities segments. With a thematic focus, the Council must look at the work of its functional commissions, of the specialized agencies and of the funds and programmes. It must then make recommendations to address areas where there is overlapping and duplication and adjust coordination processes as required. To this end, part of the discussions that have formed the general segment could be refocused and included in the coordination segment. The balance of the general segment could be left to the General Assembly for further consideration. We must eliminate repetitive debates — there is no need for issues to be reviewed by both bodies.

Canada would suggest two further changes in the way in which the Economic and Social Council does business. First, it should meet in shorter, more frequent, sessions. Secondly, we should create an expanded Bureau primarily for improving the preparation of meetings and for focusing the Council's agenda. The Bureau could in turn report its findings and recommendations to the whole of the Council's membership in the context of the organizational session.

At the Economic and Social Council this year, we agreed that it would be useful for the functional commissions to develop multi-year programmes of work. This would facilitate the eventual harmonization of work programmes across commissions, which would, in turn, facilitate the Council's role as coordinator. We should, in particular, take advantage of any planned reviews, such as that of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1996 and the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1997, in order to encourage greater harmonization. Also at the Economic and Social Council, we agreed to review the mandates of functional commissions based on the

scope of their work. This would facilitate consideration of appropriate adjustments and consolidations. The results of recent major conferences suggest the importance of reviewing and/or refocusing the work of the Commission for Social Development. In addition, we believe it would be useful to examine the possibility of consolidating all work on population issues under the Commission on Population and Development, including that which was foreseen for coverage by the Commission on Sustainable Development before the Cairo Conference. Finally, we would like to review the structure and focus of a number of commissions related to natural resources.

Our agreed conclusions from the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council touched on another issue — the importance of creating a stronger link between substantive programming and coordination, and the budgeting process. In theory, of course, this describes the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). But in practice, the potential of the CPC has not been realized. We may decide that the CPC need not continue. At a minimum, we question the usefulness of the present arrangement of joint meetings between the CPC and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

The size and intricacy of the United Nations system complicate decision-making at the centre. We need to use all mechanisms at our disposal to improve the transparency of the system to ensure that we can make well-informed decisions. We could start with two specific cases. We have all agreed on the importance of enhancing coordination with and between the regional commissions. We should also ensure that the regional commissions provide value-added. A point of departure would be to ask each of the regional commissions to produce detailed work programmes, including an indication of the value-added they bring to their members and how these benefits relate to the budget priorities. We must use this 48/162 process to ask for a full review of their work.

Another example is the invaluable data collection and analysis function of the United Nations system. Without a clear picture of what is being studied, and where and by whom, we are unable to synthesize all information available in a way that contributes to a better understanding of the state of economic and social development. We need to address this issue squarely, particularly given our agreed conclusions from the Economic and Social Council on the subject of reporting.

The last set of issues that we would like to address today is those related to coordination within the United Nations system and cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions.

We would like to applaud the initiative of the Secretary-General to create thematic task forces with participation from across the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. It is important that these be seen as flexible mechanisms, rather than as permanent structures. With experience, we may find they work well, or perhaps not, and we may find they need to alter their focus — possibly in the direction of more narrow themes. It is our hope that they will contribute to the work of functional commissions that are dealing with related themes.

Specifically with respect to mechanisms for cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, we were pleased at the participation of the Secretary-General in the recent meetings of the Development Committee of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Cooperation between secretariats can be deepened at both the headquarters and field levels. Post-crisis response is an area that requires particular attention and at an early date. The Agenda for Development discussions make provision for addressing these issues in greater depth.

We must demonstrate to our publics our collective commitment to updating the Organization and preparing it to meet the challenges of the next century. Let us not waste this important opportunity.

**Mr. Aass** (Norway): General Assembly resolution 48/162 represented a landmark in the ongoing process of the revitalization and strengthening of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. It has facilitated a closer and more continuous dialogue between Member States and United Nations funds and programmes. The resolution stressed the need for reform of the financing of the operational activities of the United Nations, but we are disappointed and concerned about the slow follow-up in this field. The resolution also initiated important reforms of the Economic and Social Council, although much more needs to be done in that area.

Norway welcomes the opportunity to assess the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of resolution 48/162. But we must do more than mere stock-taking. We must bring the process forward and find consensus solutions on the outstanding issues.

Allow me to comment briefly on the question of Executive Boards and on financing reform, before turning to issues regarding the Economic and Social Council.

First, concerning the matter of Executive Boards for the funds and programmes, the Nordic countries were the key initiators of the governance reform of the United Nations funds and programmes. Norway is by and large pleased with the way resolution 48/162 has been followed up in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We also welcome the introduction of an Executive Board in the World Food Programme from next year.

The new Executive Boards have led to a closer and more continuous dialogue between Member countries and the secretariats of the funds and programmes. We now have clearer guidance from Member States on a year-round basis. In short, governance reform has created a more action-oriented and businesslike setting for decision-making. We believe there is scope for further improvements in the working methods of the Executive Boards, and we will follow this up in the relevant bodies.

Norway supported the introduction of separate segments for UNDP and UNFPA issues, respectively, in their joint Executive Board, as well as a joint segment for common issues. We believe that this reform has made it easier for the Board to devote adequate attention to the most important issues. Given this background, we do not see the need for a separate UNFPA board. We have noted the statement to this effect by the Executive Director of the UNFPA, Ms. Nafis Sadik, at the last UNFPA/UNDP Board meeting.

I turn now to the question of the funding of United Nations operational activities for development cooperation. Resolution 48/162 called for improvements in the funding system of United Nations operational activities for development cooperation. My Government is disappointed at the limited progress made in this area. We appreciate, however, the two reports presented by the Secretary-General on the funding of the operational activities of the United Nations, which we believe represent a good basis for deliberations among Member countries.

We regret the lack of commitment by all Member States to secure the funding for development activities. All countries share the responsibility to equip the United Nations with sufficient resources. In particular, there should be improved burden-sharing between donors. Therefore, we must strengthen our efforts to secure a predictable, continued and assured funding system which preferably would increase the resource base for United Nations development activities.

The Nordic countries have previously presented an alternative three-tier funding system based on assessed contributions by all Member countries, multi-year negotiated pledges and voluntary contributions. My Government still believes that this model should be among the options for future consideration. At the same time, we are ready to consider other proposals for securing a sound and stable resource base. Such alternatives could include an assessment of new and innovative funding mechanisms. One option could be the proposal to introduce international taxes, such as transport taxes on air tickets and other proposals, to supplement the income of the Organization, *inter alia* for the funding of parts of the operational activities of the United Nations.

Let me emphasize, though, that innovative funding schemes such as international taxes can only be a supplement to the regular funding of the activities of the United Nations. Funding of the United Nations must primarily remain the responsibility of Member countries.

Finally, I would like to address the question of the Economic and Social Council. Norway believes that the Economic and Social Council at present fails to fulfil its mandate. In particular, there is a need to strengthen the Council's coordination and policy guidance role. We acknowledge that some improvements have been made. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done if the role of the Economic and Social Council is to be strengthened.

In the short run, it is important to identify more suitable thematic issues for the various segments in order to avoid repetitious debates. Issues should be selected early enough to allow for timely preparation of documentation. There is also a need to review the clustering of items to distinguish better between issues for formal approval on the one hand and issues for deliberation on the other. It is also necessary to discuss ways and means of tackling the documentation crisis. Maybe the crisis is systemic and caused by both Governments and the Secretariat. But something can be done: documents should be shortened, they should be more action-oriented, and they should contain one-page executive summaries specifying the action required by the Council. And they must be issued on time. We also encourage joint reporting from the United Nations system

on specific items. There should be improved feedback on problems and bottlenecks to the coordinators at the field level.

There is also a need to discuss far-reaching, longer-term proposals which merit a more comprehensive analysis. Is there a need to discuss every year reports from all the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, or could some reports could be taken up every second or third year? We also welcome further deliberations on how to avoid repetitious debates in the subsidiary bodies, the Economic and Social Council and the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. Surely not all reports need to be forwarded through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly.

Norway believes that the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council should be shortened rather than lengthened. A summer session of four weeks, covering all segments including the high-level segment, should be sufficient and attainable. With regard to the general segment, consideration should be given to whether it would be possible to restructure it and shorten it to one week. Some of the less substantive items could be dealt with in a restructured organizational session.

Another interesting proposal worth our consideration is that the Economic and Social Council's Bureau be given an expanded role throughout the year. We look forward to hearing the views of others on the question of the format and functions of an extended Bureau.

There is also a need to review the role of the high-level segment, as well as the status of the deliberations of that segment. Better use should be made of Ministers' presence at the Economic and Social Council. We find the proposal that the high-level segment be shifted to the end of the Council session interesting.

Economic and social issues have always been a corner-stone in the work of the United Nations. The fiftieth session of the General Assembly represents a welcome opportunity to strengthen the Organization's machinery in this field. We have listened attentively, and we look forward to hearing the suggestions of those representatives who have yet to speak and to working with others to move the ongoing reform process forward.

**Mr. Sengwe** (Zimbabwe): My delegation is pleased to participate in the consideration of agenda item 23. I wish to associate myself fully with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In addition to the search for and the maintenance of international peace and security, the United Nations is mandated by its Charter to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. In order to achieve these goals, we the Members, individually and collectively, should underwrite the development activities of the United Nations with adequate resources, on a continuous, predictable and assured basis.

In the past few years much has already been accomplished in restructuring the governance of the United Nations programmes and funds. At the risk of stating the obvious, I wish to say that we do not seek reform in the economic, social and related fields for its own sake, but consider this exercise to be a vital, integral part of a broader process encompassing revitalization of the General Assembly, reform of the Bretton Woods institutions and democratization of the Security Council.

Regrettably, however, the reformist zeal has not been matched by equal enthusiasm to arrest and reverse the persistent decline in resources for United Nations operational activities. In the negotiations that led to the reduction in the membership of the Executive Boards, we were made to believe that such restructuring would lead to a substantial increase in resources for operational funds and programmes.

Reforms should be action- and result-oriented. In this respect, we wish to point out that no amount of institutional restructuring can substitute for the necessary increase in the resource base of the United Nations. Some members of this Assembly constantly lecture us on the beauty of and the absolute need for smaller Governing Boards for the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund. The same arguments are being advanced in the discussion on reform of the Security Council. The same group of countries has argued that smaller or leaner Boards, as well as being more beautiful, would facilitate decision-making. Well, we are still assessing the impact of changes introduced so far.

My country is gravely concerned not only at the erosion of the developing countries' participation in the decision-making of the governing Boards of the United Nations specialized agencies but also at the lack of coordination between the activities of the United Nations

and those of the Bretton Woods institutions. As part of the United Nations family, these international financial institutions were not established to be parallels of or to compete with the other organs of the United Nations. Rather, they were set up in the context of the United Nations, and they therefore need to report and be accountable to this Assembly, like the other principal organs of the United Nations.

It is a matter of considerable concern to my delegation, therefore, that in the difficult negotiations leading to the adoption of resolution 48/162, reform of the Bretton Woods institutions was successfully resisted by some members in our midst. Instead, we hear that this item was high on the agenda of the June Summit of the Group of Seven — the industrialized countries. My delegation submits that the proper forum for considering this important question is the General Assembly, where all countries are represented on an equal basis. We hope that the forthcoming negotiations on the Agenda for Development will address the question of the accountability of the Bretton Woods institutions and the coordination of their activities with those of other United Nations organs.

A number of delegations — notably those of Spain on behalf of the European Union, Japan, the United States and Canada — referred to the need to set up an expanded Bureau for the Economic and Social Council. We are not convinced that there is a compelling reason to embark on this course. My delegation is not convinced that we can find a cure for our shortcomings and lack of political will through an interminable process of reform. Judging by the historical record and by our experience of the Security Council, we have no doubt that the establishment of another exclusive club, in the context of the Economic and Social Council, is not advisable. Democratic decision-making — not exclusivity — should be our goal.

**Mr. Ziauddin** (Bangladesh): It is a great honour for me to address this meeting of the plenary as we discuss the very important agenda item before us, "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields". My delegation fully supports the views expressed on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Secretary-General's report in document A/50/697 has provided useful inputs for our discussion. My delegation is deeply committed to the principles of restructuring, as stated in resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, and has taken note of the progress made in the implementation of these two resolutions.

My delegation believes that the mandated role of the United Nations in the field of economic and social development, as envisaged in the Charter, remains to be wholly fulfilled. In recent years we have observed with deep concern that development has been largely bypassed. The Organization and its budget have been focused more on peace and security issues and short-term emergency issues. This phenomenon is rather frustrating, given the promise of the post-cold-war scenario. During this fiftieth-anniversary session we are faced with the question of how to refocus our attention on pressing issues of development arising out of globalization. Any restructuring and revitalization exercise has to be able to address the crucial issues of international trade, finance, debt and technology transfer.

General Assembly resolution 48/162 is very clear on the question of resources for operational activities for development. However, the recent trend of decreasing allocations is quite contrary to the provisions on resources that were agreed upon and supported by all. It is also relevant in this context to refer to the agreed menu of official-development-assistance targets as a percentage of gross domestic product to be devoted to economic and social development. At a time when the world economy is on its way to a broad-based recovery, it is difficult to rationalize the dwindling of external financing for the developing countries. My delegation would like to reiterate that increased allocation of resources is a crucial component of the overall reform process.

The General Assembly, as the supreme policy-making organ of the United Nations, must play the leading role in promoting economic and social development. The contributions of the Second and Third Committees can bring about integration in the global economy and enhance international socio-economic development cooperation. We can further pursue the rationalization of the various agenda items before these two Committees, including their clustering, biennialization and triennialization. The general debate in the Second Committee remains an important segment; however, we have to develop the use of its outcome as a policy tool, and we therefore support the idea of agreed conclusions in this regard.

This year's session of the Economic and Social Council has been very useful in terms of addressing key issues of our concern. Its new format proves to be more functional for coordination and policy-guidance purposes. More work can be done to strengthen the Council in order to ensure its effectiveness and increased relevance.

The idea of having the high-level segment at the end and merging other high-level segments is worth examining. In addition, my delegation is flexible on the idea of a high-level inter-sessional mechanism for the Economic and Social Council so long as its work remains open-ended and transparent. In any rationalization exercise, we should be careful to avoid duplication of work between the general segment of the Council and the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly.

The work of the functional commissions remains very important for the promotion of social, economic and environmental development. Many of these commissions work in overlapping fields, and we therefore have to pursue harmonization and coordination, taking maximum advantage of their competence in different fields under their respective mandates. These functional commissions, along with the regional economic commissions, can contribute a great deal towards implementing the programmes of action adopted in the recently concluded major United Nations conferences. The work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination can be further improved for better inter-agency coordination, including in the task of following up major conferences. The role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination can be further strengthened so that the Economic and Social Council benefits from its interaction with that Committee.

In conclusion, I would like to touch on the issue of cooperation between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the newly constituted World Trade Organization. Discussions on modalities of interaction between these institutions can be further pursued. The policy dialogue of the high-level segment of this year's session of the Economic and Social Council has been very helpful. However, we must strive for more concrete results from such interaction. A similar policy dialogue could also take place during the general debate of the Second Committee. Under our discussions on "An Agenda for Development", we would elaborate mechanisms for increasing cooperation, which would ultimately contribute to strengthening the United Nations, particularly in the economic and social development fields.

**Mr. Meléndez-Barahona** (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to participate in the debate on agenda item 23, "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", on behalf of the following Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

At the outset, I wish to say that we align ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We thank the Secretary-General for his report in document A/50/697, in which he details the progress made on this issue and makes suggestions and recommendations for further improvements in the economic and social fields.

For Central America, restructuring in the economic, social and related fields falls within the larger process of the overall reform of the United Nations, particularly in this case, where the goal is to strengthen and revitalize the work of the Organization in priority areas aimed at creating better conditions and opportunities for the development and well-being of peoples.

It is necessary to continue the restructuring process in order to consolidate a modern Organization with the capacity to adapt to current conditions and to new challenges arising out of the dynamic changes occurring in the international community. These changes, however, should be effected in accordance with the principles agreed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and with the provisions of the Charter.

Central America considers that important progress has been made towards a more coherent administration of the structures and working methods of the Organization, particularly through the presentation of the Secretary-General's management plan, which is aimed at achieving better performance, greater productivity and efficiency and an allocation of resources based on predetermined strategic priorities. Special mention should be made of the Secretary-General's statement, in his report on the work of the Organization, that, within the realm of activities covered by the Economic and Social Council, new measures have been adopted for more coherent administration of operational activities carried out in conjunction with the various programmes and funds of the United Nations, including humanitarian activities.

For Central America, the subject of restructuring takes on even more importance when it is linked to operational activities for development — in particular, cooperation for the reactivation of economic growth and development in the developing countries — at a time when there is concern over the depletion of funds for this purpose, as well as fatigue on the part of the donor community because of the slow and difficult progress towards the objective of greater well-being in the international community.

In this area, it should be recalled that in the consultations held in June of this year on prospective new modalities for funding operational activities for development, the problem of a serious lack of resources for this purpose was noted. It was reiterated that contributions must continue to be characterized by neutrality, multilateralism and voluntarism, that they should be made on a secure and predictable basis and that this question should be dealt with as a matter of urgency. We support these ideas.

In this context, it is also important to take into account the commitments undertaken by States in the various international conferences held in recent years under United Nations auspices. Their implementation has been affected, especially in the developing countries, by financial difficulties, which is one more argument for the need to take measures so that the United Nations can strengthen its capacity to provide assistance in meeting the priorities and solving the problems of the international community.

It is fitting to recall that the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations states that

> "The speed and extent of change in today's world point to a future of great complexity and challenge" *(resolution 50/6)*

and that

> "following the end of the cold war, and as the end of the century approaches, we must create new opportunities for peace, development ... and cooperation." *(ibid.)*

As regards development, the Declaration points out that

> "A dynamic, vigorous, free and equitable international economic environment is essential to the well-being of humankind and to international peace, security and stability. This objective must be addressed, in greater measure and more effectively, by the United Nations system." *(ibid.)*

However, in order to dedicate itself more vigorously to this activity, it is indispensable for the United Nations to have a broad and stable financial base, as has been pointed out by the Secretary-General. In this respect, we believe it is important to reiterate our optimism regarding the clear statement made by the Heads of State and Government of the seven major industrialized countries and the President of the European Commission at the economic Summit in Halifax, in which they expressed their intention to cooperate with other countries in order to set into motion a new strategy for international cooperation and to define the specific contribution of United Nations bodies in order to improve efficiency and consistency in the economic, social, environmental and humanitarian-assistance fields. We hope that that statement will be reflected in effective support for strengthening the United Nations system and, thus, its efforts in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Another point that we think important is that of the Executive Boards. We are in favour of an assessment of the effectiveness of measures adopted to improve their working methods. This includes the possibility of revising the composition of the Boards to make them more representative, in line with the number of Members of the organization, in the same way as that principle is being applied to other United Nations bodies. We do not believe that efficiency has a direct correlation with the number of members, but, rather, with working procedures, decision-making procedures, transparency and the political will applied by States in order to attain objectives of interest to the international community at large.

We support the initiative of establishing an executive board for the United Nations Population Fund. We think not only that account should be taken of the traditional concept of equitable geographic representation, but also that an effort should be made to give smaller States and States with fewer resources the opportunity to participate.

One last aspect we think relevant is the need for efforts for genuine coordination, not only between the main organs of the United Nations — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — but also with the international financial institutions of Bretton Woods and the new World Trade Organization.

Since we cannot disregard the fact that the United Nations objectives cannot be achieved separately, the interdependence between political, economic, social and environmental phenomena and the promotion of human rights and democracy means that we must seek overall solutions with common areas of responsibility.

The United Nations has played an essential role in economic and social development. In spite of the efforts made, many inequalities still persist in the international community, which has been made clear in the recent global conferences. It is necessary to follow up this work in accordance with the commitments undertaken, which are closely tied to the objectives of sustainable development.

These activities, as well as the operational activities for development, deserve greater recognition and support from the United Nations — in particular, those activities to be carried out in the developing countries. Without the support of the United Nations, these activities may be largely thwarted.

**Mr. Goumenny** (Ukraine): First of all, the Ukrainian delegation would like to join in the expressions of gratitude to the Secretary-General for his reports on reforming the social and economic sector of the United Nations.

In our opinion, the documents prepared serve as a good basis for the current international dialogue in this Hall. It is no exaggeration to say that this is a contribution towards making the development of further, progressive transformations feasible in this important field of United Nations activities.

The results of the half-century of United Nations history, summed up recently by the international community at the Special Commemorative Meeting, testify not only to the successes of the Organization but also to the need to persist in efforts towards its restructuring and perfection.

In this context, we wish to state with satisfaction that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council view the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields as a continuing process aimed at adapting the United Nations to the conditions of the present-day world.

It is important for us to achieve consensus on a vision of the ways and methods of implementing this process in order to achieve progress in reform activities without losing dynamism. That is why the finalization of the document entitled "An Agenda for Development" should be constructive and fruitful. It should result in the renewal of approaches to the strategy of future United Nations activities for ensuring sustainable economic growth and social development and finding new ways towards the consolidation of cooperation with institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

First of all, we should enhance the level of coordination in the United Nations social and economic sector and lay out a clear-cut system of priorities for its activities. In our opinion, this would promote the cause of ensuring the effectiveness of the United Nations system, in response to the decisions taken at important international conferences on economic and social issues held in recent years.

In this context, we consider that the activities of the General Assembly's Second Committee and Third Committee need further rationalization and complementarity.

We support the provision of the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations on the need to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council as the main coordinating link of the United Nations in the social and economic fields. Extension of the range of participants and enhancement of the effectiveness of the political dialogue on the priority issues of development within the framework of the Council will promote revitalization of the processes of renewal of the Organization.

Because of the need for ensuring a coordinated approach by the United Nations system to the implementation of the decisions of important international forums, we regard the coordinating segment of the sessions of the Council as a key link in its activities.

In our opinion it is expedient, within the coordinating segment, for the annual thematic reviews of the functioning of the United Nations social and economic sector in the implementation of the outcome of such forums to be held on the priority intersectoral themes selected previously. Such reviews should be aimed at the elaboration of practical recommendations on the consolidation of cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions on the most important trends of activities in the sphere of development. Reports on the results of the reviews should be submitted for further consideration by the General Assembly.

Review and readjustment of the structure of the Council's subsidiary mechanisms, as well as revision of their mandates/working methods, also seem expedient. In cooperation with its functional commissions, the Council should ensure a more precise distribution of the tasks

assigned and more thorough coordination of their long-term programmes to implement the results of the international conferences.

The delegation of Ukraine also sees high potential opportunities in the activities of the regional economic commissions. We support the views contained in the 1995 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council that such commissions should play an important role in assisting countries in each region in the implementation of the recommendations of conferences held under United Nations auspices. To this end, it is our view that the parameters of clear-cut collaboration in the chain linking the Economic and Social Council to the regional commissions, the United Nations funds and programmes and the field resident coordinators should be established.

In this context we take a positive view of the results of restructuring and defining the priorities in the activities of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), which has accumulated considerable experience in rendering assistance to the reforms in the countries of Eastern Europe. Ukraine attaches a high value to ECE's efforts to assist the introduction of reforms in those countries and stands for expansion and deepening of the Commission's activities in this area.

Finally, the establishment of an extended Bureau of the Economic and Social Council in order to ensure the current guidance and organization of the activity of the Council between sessions would seem to be productive.

In the framework of the search for additional ways of renewing the socioeconomic sector of the United Nations, we are also ready to consider further and more radical steps in the reform of the Economic and Social Council. In my delegation's opinion, the time has come for a substantial study of the possibility of establishing a new body within the United Nations system — a council for economic security — which would be invested with wider powers and be comparable in weight and influence to the Security Council.

The President of Ukraine, Mr. Leonid Kuchma, in his statement at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, when proposing the establishment of a council for economic security, described its major goal in the following way:

> "To identify strategic prospects for mankind's development and for preventive efforts in the decades ahead." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Plenary Meetings, 35th meeting. p. 7*)

At the same time, it seems that the mandate of this body should cover not only monitoring, analysis and coordination of the programme of international cooperation in the economic and social fields, but also a number of other important tasks. Such tasks might include the elimination from international practice of any kind of economic aggression — in particular, exercising or threatening to exercise embargoes, boycotts, trade and financial blockades and making use of economic links in order to exercise political pressure. In this capacity, in our opinion, the council for economic security would contribute to observance of the principles of respect for national independence, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual benefit.

It is also the opinion of the delegation of Ukraine that efforts to enhance the level of inter-agency coordination should become an organic part of working practice in reforming the United Nations socio-economic sector. We believe that the capabilities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in this field are far from being fully utilized. It would also be important to ensure appropriate cooperation between the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Economic and Social Council and ACC.

In conclusion, the Ukrainian delegation notes with satisfaction the positive trends in the realization of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 48/162. The spirit of consensus reached two years ago at the time of its adoption opens up good prospects for new progressive institutional changes. At the same time, it is desirable that in the future its provisions be fully implemented in all spheres, including the distribution of seats in the Executive Board of the World Food Programme.

**Mr. Kasanda** (Zambia): The delegation of Zambia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on agenda item 23 "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", contained in document A/50/697.

At the outset, my delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement by the delegation of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77.

We recognize that while the task of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations in the economic and social fields is an enormous one, notable progress is

already taking place. The mandates by the General Assembly, in particular resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, are slowly being implemented. There is, however, a lot that needs to be done, especially in achieving the overall objective of this important endeavour.

While the institutional changes mandated by the resolutions I have cited are important, we should not lose sight of the overall objective which, in our view, is that the United Nations must be better placed to fulfil its role in the economic, social and related fields as mandated by the Charter. This Organization through the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary machinery must be able to deliver effectively on development problems facing its Members States, especially the developing countries. Of primary importance in this respect is the effective implementation of the various programmes of action arising from United Nations conferences.

The Economic and Social Council must assist in validating the relevance of the United Nations with respect to global economic and social problems by being action-oriented. Effective policy-making processes and implementation are central to this process. We want to see improved coordination of the work of the Council's subsidiary machinery. Policy integration as well needs to be addressed. The functional commissions, standing bodies, ad hoc groups and expert bodies must operate in a coordinated and harmonious manner, avoiding overlaps where possible, and ensuring a clear division of responsibilities with respect to cross-cutting themes, especially in the implementation of and follow-up to development programmes.

The report of the Secretary-General has presented us with a number of proposals on policy, programme implementation and financing on which the Assembly's fiftieth session should decide in order to advance this process of restructuring.

With respect to the Economic and Social Council and its policy-development process, including the organization of its work, our views are as follows.

First, we would like to see streamlined reporting. There is so much repetition in the reporting process. Similar reports, with only minor variations, are presented to different bodies before they reach the Council. In some cases the Council simply forwards these reports to the General Assembly session with a covering note.

Secondly, it is very difficult, especially for small delegations, most of which happen to be from the least developed countries, to keep track of various layers of bodies. Strengthening the coordinating bodies, in particular the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Joint Inspection Unit, can greatly improve the situation.

Thirdly, we would like to support the proposals in the report relating to the enhancement of the impact of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, more especially the proposal on the high-level segment for negotiated conclusions in place of the presidential summary. The theme or themes for the high-level segment should also be selected well in advance to allow for adequate preparation.

The role of regional commissions should be equally enhanced in this process of restructuring. At times the regional commissions seem not to be properly taken into account. Their role in policy development and execution should be recognized, enhanced and properly integrated. They should also be funded adequately.

My delegation would like to see the role of ad hoc bodies and expert bodies strengthened. Nevertheless, we would like to see more transparency in their work — as much as possible. Open-ended ad hoc bodies should have their work programmes and timetables circulated in advance.

My delegation stated at the beginning of its statement that the objective and value of the restructuring process will be judged by how it impacts on programme delivery. Of particular importance in this regard is the financing of the operational activities for development. The continued decline in voluntary contributions, accompanied by unfulfilled financing commitments and targets, presents a less optimistic picture regarding the future of development cooperation.

My delegation attaches great importance to the discussions on the financing of development activities. Some recommendations, already advanced, are very important and deserve serious consideration. The financing aspect should, however, be dealt with in its entirety. The role of the Bretton Woods institutions in respect of harmonization of programmes funded through them, as well as in respect of the issue of external debt, should be discussed comprehensively. This is important especially to ensure that the finances available are commensurate with the needs of developing countries.

Lastly, the restructuring process itself requires adequate finances.

**Mr. Rojas** (Venezuela): Venezuela wishes to join those delegations that have supported here the need to give continuity to the important restructuring exercise initiated by resolution 45/264 and pursued through resolutions 46/235 and 48/162. In fact, we recall that process originated even earlier, particularly in decisions which were adopted by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in the middle of the last decade, with my delegation's active participation. It has been an incremental process, but a very fruitful one, and we believe now is the appropriate time to bring it to its successful conclusion.

We therefore support the idea that, on the basis of the Secretary-General's recommendation contained in his report in document A/50/697 and complemented by proposals made by delegations, the Assembly should adopt at this session a new draft resolution on this item which consolidates, broadens and improves what has already been agreed to in connection with the principal organs, subsidiary organs and other bodies and entities of the system; operational activities, including the funding aspect; and inter-agency coordination.

Many speakers have expressed concern here about the question of the mandate, including institutional aspects, given the special Working Group now considering the preparation of "An Agenda for Development", and the mandate's possible overlapping or duplication with the exercise we are now considering. Although the problem certainly exists, we share the opinion that the process we are considering here today of the follow-up to resolution 48/162 and prior resolutions is a process with a life of its own which should take its natural course. Furthermore, we believe that ideally the resolution we adopt on the subject should be finalized before the resumption of the work of the Working-Group on the Agenda for Development, so that the resolution can serve as a reference point and a useful tool for the group. Here we may be confining ourselves to improvements in the working methods of the various mechanisms of the system in the economic and social spheres. In the Working Group on the Agenda for Development, and possibly also in the recently established Working Group on the strengthening of the United Nations, we will be talking about much deeper institutional changes.

One area in which all of this is highlighted is the relationship between the United Nations and the international financial and commercial organisms, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

The Working Group on an Agenda for Development has a clear mandate to propose changes to the *status quo* in order to arrive at a more organic and coordinated relationship among these entities, and indeed we hope that this can be accomplished. But this should not prevent us, in the context of our discussion of agenda item 23, from recommending specific operational measures that would contribute to making these relationships increasingly effective and fruitful.

The question of the Economic and Social Council is the other topic of fundamental importance that will necessarily be considered at different levels by each of the forums and Working Groups mentioned earlier. Venezuela, which contributed to the drafting of the San Francisco Charter, has always been a firm defender of the Council's role within the system and of the crucial functions assigned to it by the Charter in Chapters IX and X, and in particular in Articles 62 and 63. Today more than ever, we believe that a genuine revitalization and transformation of the Economic and Social Council is the only way not only to accomplish what has so far remained undone, but also to bring definitively into the realm of the United Nations the important international discussion of the fundamental issues of economic and social cooperation, including the coordination of macro-economic policies. The Council can well be the ideal forum for a revitalized and dynamic North-South dialogue on questions of international economic cooperation and coordination. There is no need to invent anything new, much less to consider resorting to mechanisms outside the United Nations system, for this purpose.

For all of these reasons, we are completely open-minded on this subject, and we welcome the fact that a series of innovative proposals have been put forward on resolutions that would make the Council more operational, wide-ranging and credible. This includes in particular the ideas that were presented last year during the hearings on development and reflected in reports submitted on this subject by, respectively, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. We note with satisfaction that some of these ideas are again referred to by the Secretary-General in the report (A/50/697) he submitted to us on the agenda item under consideration today.

**Mr. Lakatos** (Hungary): It is an honour and a privilege for me to address the Assembly on the item "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", on behalf of the Republic of Hungary.

We are particularly pleased with today's extensive and constructive dialogue, which has proved the common and shared responsibility, the general interest and the multitude of views of the Member States concerning the United Nations reform.

Being the last speaker today, I have to respond positively to your invitation, Sir, to respect the time limit for statements. Therefore I intend to be very brief, and I will refrain from making a detailed presentation on behalf of my delegation.

By the same token, I should like to place on record that my delegation fully supports the statement made by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union and that Hungary shares the opinion expressed by the European Union.

My delegation has followed this debate with the utmost interest, and we welcome the important statement by the representative of the United States. We underline the importance of further careful and successful structural changes in the United Nations family in order to achieve greater effectiveness of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

In the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, and only a few weeks after the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly, the Member States rightly expect the United Nations to be capable of responding effectively to the most pressing global problems. The restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations must serve this goal.

We agree that these proposals open a real window of opportunity for a more productive relationship among the various United Nations organs dealing with the economic and social fields.

The importance of the item under consideration and the long list of questions asked today by delegations show clearly that this topic deserves careful examination in the near future as well. Today we took a further step in that direction.

At the end of a long day, full of ideas on how to make our activities concerning the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields more fruitful, I do not wish to forget one very important factor related directly to the item under consideration. Let me take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my delegation to the staff of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies — all those men and women working with devotion and commendable results towards our common endeavours.

**The Acting Chairman:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 23.

**Programme of work**

**The Acting President:** I should like to inform Members that agenda item 43, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", which was scheduled for Monday 20 November 1995, in the afternoon, will now be considered at a later date to be announced.

I should also like to inform the Assembly that agenda item 38, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", which was scheduled for Tuesday, 21 November 1995, in the afternoon, will also be considered at a later date to be announced.

*The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.*

United Nations A/50/PV.66

General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

*Official Records*

66th plenary meeting
Monday, 20 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Pibulsonggram (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.*

**Statements on the occasion of the sixth Africa Industrialization Day**

**The Acting President:** I should like to read out a statement that the President of the General Assembly has requested that I deliver on his behalf on the occasion of the sixth Africa Industrialization Day. The statement reads as follows:

"This year's celebration of Africa Industrialization Day comes at a historic time. A few weeks ago, the largest assembly of leaders the world has ever seen came to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. In their Declaration, they pledged to

"'redirect [the Organization] to greater service to humankind, especially to those who are suffering and are deeply deprived'. (*resolution 50/6*)

"This, they proclaimed, is 'the practical and moral challenge of our time' (*ibid.*).

"No challenge is perhaps more critical to the international community today than the development of Africa. To many, Africa represents a plethora of problems: poverty, political instability, civil strife, poor economic performance, rapidly growing population, environmental degradation, hunger and malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. But to many more, Africa is a land of promise and opportunity.

"Africa is home to over 700 million people, half of whom are under the age of 15. The continent occupies nearly one quarter of the globe's land surface; yet, despite escalating birth rates, it still only accounts for a little more than 10 per cent of the world's population. It is a continent where human and natural resources abound, resources that are the building blocks of future prosperity.

"The challenge for Africa is to harness its vast resources in the attainment of sustainable social and economic development. Industrialization holds the key to meeting this challenge. Indeed, the General Assembly, in resolution 44/237 of 22 December 1989, proclaimed 20 November as Africa Industrialization Day. The observance of this Day symbolizes the international community's solidarity with the countries of Africa. Above all, it reaffirms the principle of partnership between Africa and the international community in the industrial development of the continent.

"Africans themselves acknowledge that they bear the main responsibility for their development. Over the past decade they have demonstrated a strong determination to overcome their developmental problems. A significant number of

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countries have initiated far-reaching policy reforms. The World Bank found that 23 out of 26 countries had adopted adequate monetary policies, 14 had done reasonably well in reducing their fiscal deficits, and 19 had made significant adjustments to exchange rates. The improved policy environment enabled eight countries to achieve or exceed the 6 per cent gross domestic product growth rate set under the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. In spite of the unfavourable external environment, some countries succeeded in reversing the trend of deindustrialization or in rehabilitating their industrial infrastructures. In fact, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has found that in many African countries the manufacturing sector grew faster than the economy during the period 1983 to 1993.

"Still, many consider the progress made by African countries too modest when compared with the enormity of the problems facing the continent today. Continued progress in meeting the daunting demands of development in Africa will depend a great deal on the support of the international community. Many African Governments have undertaken courageous reform measures, and the international community must abide by its political, economic and moral obligation to assist Africa. After all, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, as well as the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, rests on the consensus view that the development of Africa is a priority concern of the international community.

"The United Nations system has played a key role in keeping the pressing concerns of Africa very much in the public mind. It has played a catalytic role in mobilizing international support for the development of the continent. UNIDO, in particular, has carried out these vital tasks in the field of industrial development. Along with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, UNIDO has actively promoted international economic cooperation for African industrialization within the framework of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

"The theme of this year's celebration of Africa Industrialization Day is human-resource development. This theme is most appropriate at a time when we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, for our Organization can provide no better service to humanity than to help people and nations to realize their fullest potential. Human-resource development helps make this possible. Training and education enable people to grow and create opportunities for their own betterment. So too do economies. Industry, more than any other sector of the economy, needs trained and educated leaders, entrepreneurs, managers and workers if it is to thrive and grow.

"Africa deserves our solidarity and steadfast support as it strives to fulfil its hopes and aspirations for the future. As we celebrate Africa Industrialization Day, let this simple but worthy message be uppermost in our minds."

I now call on the representative of the Secretary-General.

**Mr. Kouyaté** (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs): I am delighted to deliver the statement of the Secretary-General on the occasion of Africa Industrialization Day:

"Each year, on 20 November, we celebrate Africa Industrialization Day. This is the day when our thoughts turn to Africa and its progress on the path to industrialization. I am pleased to take part in the celebration of this Day as I have always attached the highest importance to the development of Africa.

"Over the past years, we have had ample opportunity to take stock of the critical situation in Africa. We know about the many problems confronting Africa today. We need to act in concert, in the spirit of true partnership, if we are to move ahead in addressing these problems. Africans are primarily responsible for their own development, but the international community bears a clear responsibility in supporting and sustaining their efforts at helping themselves. Together, we must take action on many fronts if we are to succeed.

"During the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva last summer, I spoke of the urgent need for the United Nations system to move simultaneously in several directions. First, we must strengthen regional institutions and promote intensified regional cooperation. Secondly, we must help African countries to diversify their economies, particularly

in the aftermath of the Uruguay Round trade agreements. Thirdly, we must deal with the problem of African debt. Fourthly, we must help African countries to establish effective social institutions. Finally, it is essential for the United Nations system to support the efforts of African countries to improve public education and vocational training. Africa's population, equipped with the proper skills and knowledge, is the driving force of development.

"This is why I am particularly delighted that the theme of this year's Africa Industrialization Day is human-resource development. Investing in people is investing in the future. It is an investment that yields returns far beyond its initial cost. Training opens the door to a better, brighter and more dignified future.

"The United Nations system has been at the forefront of international efforts to develop the human resources of Africa. Within their respective mandates, the various Funds, Programmes and specialized agencies have all made substantial contributions to these efforts. Here I would like to note, in particular, the close collaboration between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity in supporting industry-specific training and educational programmes in Africa. These organizations have effectively carried out training to upgrade technical and entrepreneurial skills and know-how among Africans in various branches of industry. Through these programmes, they have helped create jobs, raised incomes and improved the productivity of industry in the continent.

"On this note, I should like to mention also a special initiative, which I recently launched at the Administrative Committee on Coordination, on the development of Africa, a main aim of which is to build both human and institutional capacities in the continent.

"The celebration of Africa Industrialization Day should impart fresh impetus to the efforts of Africans to push ahead despite the difficulties. For those of us in the United Nations system, this Day should be a tangible reminder of the need to redouble our efforts and to do an even better job in assisting Africa. And for the larger community of nations let this Day be marked by renewed resolve to help Africa fulfil its hopes and dreams for a better and brighter future."

**Agenda item 112**

**Human rights questions**

**(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

**Special commemorative meeting to mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance**

**The Acting President:** This morning, the General Assembly will, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting and pursuant to its resolution 49/213 of 23 December 1994, devote a special commemorative plenary meeting at its fiftieth session to mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 112, "Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

On this occasion, I should like to read out a statement that the President of the General Assembly has requested that I deliver on his behalf:

"By its resolution 48/126 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly proclaimed 1995 the United Nations Year for Tolerance, a year which happens to coincide with our Organization's fiftieth anniversary.

"International years and other commemorative landmarks come and go, carrying with them messages of hope and great expectations. As a general rule, they have in common that they deal with more or less quantifiable and measurable objectives such as literacy, communication, shelter for the homeless and many others, or that they address specific target groups such as women, refugees, disabled persons, youth. But the Year for Tolerance, while sharing the lofty ideals with its sister Years, has this particularity that it addresses an issue that is very difficult to measure by any yardstick. We are dealing here with a complex human phenomenon where prejudice, feelings, impulses, social hierarchies and irrational fear of the 'other' bring their forces together to make it difficult to design clear strategies of action.

"Yet we, who speak on behalf of our peoples and nations in this and other forums of the

international community, have the duty at least to address issues that are in our power, notably by creating the climate favourable to tolerance through the construction of democratic institutions, and the curbing of acts of intolerance, violence, discrimination and exclusion. And it is precisely here that international codes of conduct, monitoring and denunciation are significant and call for the strengthening of the international networks and organizations protecting human rights in the broad sense of the term, including civil, political, social, cultural and global rights. For we shall not forget that our Charter binds us, we, the peoples of the United Nations, to

> 'reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person ... and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours'.

"It is likewise imperative to keep constantly present in our minds and hearts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of opinion and expression, and which, most significantly, stipulates in article 26 that education

> 'shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups'.

"I am informed that the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to whose wisdom we owe this initiative, adopted just a few days ago, at its twenty-eighth session, a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and that, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 49/213, this instrument, together with a follow-up programme of action, will be submitted to this Assembly at its fifty-first session. On your behalf, I would like to express to UNESCO our appreciation for its system-wide action to coordinate the Year's activities.

"Beyond any given time-frame, let us all transcend our differences to renew our determined commitment to the promotion of the concept of tolerance as a prerequisite for a peaceful and non-violent world. Let us all hope that the rich intellectual contribution of the Year of Tolerance will be reflected in the everyday life of our peoples in full recognition of and respect for what could be the source of a fascinating richness: diversity."

I now call on the representative of the Secretary-General.

**Mr. Kouyaté** (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs) (*interpretation from French*): I shall now read out the message of the Secretary-General to this meeting marking the end of the United Nations Year for Tolerance:

"By solemnly deciding to declare 1995 the "United Nations Year for Tolerance", the Organization sought to demonstrate — by that very declaration — its commitment and resolve in the service of the rights of the human person.

"Fifty years ago, the founding fathers of the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women. This is the commitment that we sought to renew together in 1995.

"This mobilization in support of tolerance is even more important today, since the hazards of the contemporary world have often led to a decline in social values and in shared beliefs. Uncertainty about tomorrow gives rise to a diffuse fear. At such times, fear of the 'other' grows and there is a great temptation to become self-absorbed. It is therefore all the more necessary to give peoples and nations, men and women of all countries, concrete reasons to hope and to believe in the future.

"We also know that the troubled time in which we live is conducive to the rise of all kinds of fundamentalism and all sorts of fanaticism that sow violence and death. We have, alas, recently seen examples of this.

"The year which is drawing to a close, therefore, does not mark the end of our effort in support of tolerance. Quite the contrary. On behalf of the noble objectives of the Charter, on behalf of the principles of the United Nations, and in the memory of those who gave their lives for their ideals, we must now, more than ever, say: 'no to intolerance'! 'no to fanaticism'! 'no to all kinds of micronationalism'.

"The United Nations must tirelessly continue to demonstrate to the men and women of this era that the prevailing openness in the world offers a formidable opportunity for the future, an unexpected chance to transcend our differences in order to attain what I once referred to as "the irreducible human element", that is, the quintessence of the values by which we define ourselves as a single human community.

"May this final celebration of the United Nations Year for Tolerance therefore also serve as the occasion on which we call for the redoubling of our efforts to close the apparent divides between us and overcome our momentary differences, our ideological and cultural barriers.

"Let all of us therefore continue together, well beyond this special year, to work within the United Nations to instil the spirit of tolerance in the heart of the human community" *(SG/SM/5814)*.

**The Acting President**: I now call on the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Çelem** (Turkey): Today, after far too many millennia of wars, oppression and violence, the world stands poised at the threshold of the "culture of peace".

The human family can leave behind its ugly ages of ignorance and arrogance in order to start living in the lovely house of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi said:

"My house must have no doors or windows — so that winds and breezes from all sides may enter and pass through it freely."

We now possess the power to take that "house of nurturing winds" and to make it into the "palace of tolerance".

As the United Nations Year for Tolerance nears its end, we note with deep satisfaction and pride that we have come a long way since 1991, when the idea for an international tolerance year was born in the mind of a Turkish Minister of Culture and presented by the Turkish Republic to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference.

The United Nations Year for Tolerance has already raised public consciousness in scores of countries on all continents, for mutual understanding in the service of world peace, for the compelling need to bury history's poisonous harvest of hatred, for replacing destructive passion with constructive compassion.

Yet in recent years we have been witnessing many traumatic events which continue to ravage our conscience: assassination, terrorism, massacre, rape, racism and genocide. Sadly, we all realize that the world has a long, way to go before we can obliterate the evil of intolerance that fans the flames of religious wars, ethnic strife, fanaticism, brutality and mass murder.

UNESCO, entrusted by the United Nations with promoting the ethical and educational basis of international tolerance, is inspired by the Preamble of its Constitution, which proclaims:

"since wars began in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Long after the end of this Year, UNESCO will continue to nourish mutual understanding through knowledge of the values and principles that could unite nations.

Unless we crush the many-breasted monster that suckles aggression and animosity, unless we stop drinking from the venomous spring of prejudice, we shall continue living in an age of darkness.

Lack of tolerance is the mother of all evil. But tolerance is the bare minimum for the establishment of a milieu of moral solidarity. It is merely the core of ethics before the world can enter the era of a better global society.

We must go beyond tolerance. The challenge is to learn to live in the hearts and minds of others, to honour the beliefs of others and, in all sincerity, to love others.

We have to transform tolerance into a creative strategy. Its ideals have been eloquently expressed by poets throughout the centuries. Listen to Mevlana Jalaluddin al-Rumi, the Anatolian Islamic mystic, who said in the thirteenth century:

"In all mosques, temples, churches I find one shrine alone."

and again

"Whatever you think of war, I am far, far from it;
Whatever you think of love, I am that, only that, all that."

It was this humanistic ideal that gave inspiration to the concepts of the International Year for Tolerance, to all the activities organized in Turkey and throughout the world, to the Meeting of Experts on Tolerance held in Istanbul on 16-17 April 1993, and to the Istanbul Conference of 8-9 February 1994, which produced the impressive Bosphorus Declaration on Tolerance. The regional conferences held by UNESCO in Brazil, India, Italy, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Tunisia culminated in early October of this year in the Istanbul Symposium on Tolerance. The climax of this extensive international effort is the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, an eloquent document for a new world spirit and for an agenda to foster the culture of peace.

The Turkish Republic is proud to have made a sustained contribution, from beginning to end, at the United Nations, at UNESCO and elsewhere, to the Declaration and the Year for Tolerance. Yet we feel strongly that the end of the Year is the beginning of what should be an educational process for tolerance and peace. In fact, it should be a call to mobilization for a new world-wide Age of Enlightenment, based on the recognition that diversity need not lead to adversity, nor group identity to enmity.

The founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, proclaimed the principle: "Peace in our homeland, peace in the world". To secure that peace, it is essential to create "Peace in the heart, peace in the mind". In that way, the world could drive wars out of minds and hatred out of hearts.

Cultural differences have the power of not only constituting a richness of human experience for the entire world, but also creating the moral and intellectual foundation of universal harmony. Tolerance can be the quintessence of a new interaction, a new integration, based on enlightened altruism — one for all, all for one.

The international community holds the promise of dignity, prosperity, peace and happiness for all by achieving the solidarity of diverse cultures and heterogeneous ideas, provided that it can say: "*Vive la différence*! *Vive la tolérance*!" Our fervent hope is that the emerging culture of peace will make another Year for Tolerance unnecessary.

The words articulated by Mevlana Jalaluddin al-Rumi in the thirteenth century are still relevant:

"When weapons and ignorance come together, tyrants arise to devastate the world with their cruelty."

Every act of intolerance is a tyranny. Every act of hatred is a weapon of destruction. Every prejudice is cruelty to its victim as well as to its perpetrator.

Our prayers are for a world of tolerance, a house of understanding that is open, generous and full of happiness. In al-Rumi's words:

"What need is there for doors and walls in a house in which hearts are open to other hearts, where minds are open to other minds?"

I hope the legacy of the United Nations Year for Tolerance will be a future of creative tolerance for the coming generations.

Let me conclude with these words of the great Turkish poet of the thirteenth century, Yunus Emre:

"Don't look down on anyone; never break a heart:
The mystic must love all seventy-two nations."

The poet also says:

"We regard no one's belief as contrary to ours:
True peace is born when all faiths are united."

and again

"For those who truly love God and his ways,
All the people of the world are brothers and sisters."

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of Spain, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

**Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo** (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish):* I am speaking on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia associate themselves with the content of this statement.

We regret that our special meeting today to commemorate the United Nations Year for Tolerance comes in the wake of the sad events that recently took place in Nigeria, which illustrate how far we still have to go in our struggle for tolerance in the world. The practice of tolerance is an essential element for the effective promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The rule of law is the true foundation of tolerance. We condemn the execution last 10 November of Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight co-defendants. That act constituted a clear failure by Nigeria to honour its human rights commitments under the international instruments to which Nigeria is a party. The European Union has already taken measures with regard to the situation in Nigeria and is considering additional ones.

Fifty years ago the Charter of the United Nations was signed in San Francisco. In the preamble to the Charter, the signatories accepted the practice of tolerance as one of the commitments to be fulfilled in order to attain the goals of the United Nations. Intolerance in its various forms was then, as it is now, often a prelude to the breakdown of institutions and the outbreak of conflict. Nearly 100 armed conflicts have erupted since the end of the cold war. With few exceptions, these conflicts have not been between States, but have taken place within countries, often as a result of ethnic nationalistic and religious tensions. As the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states,

> "Since wars began in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

That is precisely the logic behind the United Nations Year for Tolerance, proclaimed by the General Assembly on the basis of a UNESCO initiative. Discrimination against persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, acts motivated by racism and xenophobia, religious extremism and the marginalization and exclusion from society of vulnerable groups jeopardize peace and stability and erode democratic principles. The coexistence of different religions and cultures in most societies today is a fact. Accepting diversity means respecting other people's rights and freedoms. That respect, in turn, ensures a just and solid foundation for society.

Among the objectives of the United Nations Year for Tolerance are those of raising awareness of the dimensions and root causes of intolerance, mobilizing public opinion through education and developing practical guidelines to help policy-makers, educators and institutions solve problems related to intolerance.

The General Assembly invited UNESCO to lead those endeavours. This year the Organization has focused on showing, through cultural and educational activities all over the world, how tolerance is linked to peace and stability. It has also provided background materials to people and institutions involved in education for tolerance. UNESCO has coordinated the Year effectively, combining messages in the media and actions in the field with a series of conferences and debates on education, culture, democracy and human rights and the interrelationships between them all.

In addition to the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and Governments themselves were asked to contribute. In the European context, two years ago the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which now has 38 European States as members, adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance, with a view to mobilizing resources in a campaign against those phenomena and promoting tolerance and open societies. Paralleling the United Nations Year for Tolerance, its focus is also on education and the role of the media.

The Plan of Action stresses analysis of legislation and policies in this area and the evaluation of their effectiveness, as well as the necessary cooperation of non-governmental organizations. The European Committee against Racism and Intolerance, which is an important component of these efforts, is working to strengthen guarantees against all forms of discrimination and to evaluate the effectiveness of the range of measures adopted by member States to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance. We welcome the participation of youth in the launching, in December 1994, of the European youth campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

The European Union has also taken steps, in the context of an overall strategy to combat acts of xenophobic racism and violence, to improve cooperation and the exchange of information in the fields of education, social affairs and judicial matters. All those efforts are complemented by actions taken at the national level. Civil society which is the ultimate target of these and other actions, must also participate in these efforts if they are to be effective and sustained.

Tolerance must become one of the keynotes of social discourse. To settle for less would be an affront to human dignity. It would also mean that ethnic divisiveness and religious intolerance would continue to exacerbate poverty, destabilize peaceful development and hinder the achievement of peace. It would also spell failure regarding one of the goals of the peoples of the United Nations, set down in the Charter 50 years ago.

The European Union wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the objectives of the United Nations Year for Tolerance. We continue to strive to make our societies even more tolerant. Our debate today must signal that the commitment to tolerance is shared by all.

**The Acting President**: I now call on Mr. Simon Wiesenthal, Special Envoy of the Austrian Government.

**Mr. Wiesenthal** (Austria): It is a great honour for me to be allowed to speak to this audience, as the representative of Austria, at the end of the Year For Tolerance. In four years we will be standing at the end of this century, which has been rightly termed "a century of crimes". Thus there is a need to speak about tolerance and also to act on this principle.

Only a short time ago, the world was shocked by the senseless assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv. There could be no better example of what can happen as a result of lack of tolerance, the inability to deal with differences of opinion in any other way than with aggression and murder. It made clear to us once again how much hatred and how little tolerance there are in the world.

In this century I have myself seen communism become a form of government under Stalin and — thankfully — I have seen its downfall. I have seen the rise of National Socialism under Hitler — and I have lived to see its downfall as well. Both of these regimes adopted measures that cost millions of lives. In the Soviet Union the victims were mainly Soviet citizens, the exact numbers of which are still unknown, as all figures used so far have been estimates. The Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of millions of foreign nationals. Altogether, about 50 million people, including 6 million Jewish victims, were killed as a result of the war and the innumerable crimes committed in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany. Together, these two dictatorships extinguished about 100 million human lives during this century.

Underlying both Stalinism and National Socialism were two fundamentals: hate and technology.

Even after the First World War, with its millions of victims, many nations had already pledged to never again wage war. On 27 August, 1928, Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the United States of America signed the so-called Kellogg Agreement, with the aim of ensuring peace. This was followed by a series of disarmament conferences to reduce arms of all kinds. All these efforts were cut short, however, when National Socialism came to power in Germany. Another terrible world war began and, with it, the loss of human rights for the suffering civilian populations. There were again millions of victims, and the Holocaust especially, the systematic extermination of 6 million Jews, has gone down in history as an unprecedented example of crime. The Holocaust has come to serve as a warning for the future of mankind and must continue to serve as a reminder for future generations. At the Nuremberg trials, when it came to judging those responsible for the Second World War after National Socialism had collapsed, the charges also included explicit reference to the violations of the Kellogg Agreement.

As long as there are still survivors of the two dictatorships to which I have referred and their satellites, these people — and not only those directly affected — will ask themselves: What has to be done in order to prevent a repetition of the terrible atrocities that have taken place in our century? Should there be more disarmament conferences? And what about the other fundamental that fanned the flames of aggression at the onset of all these immense crimes — the element of hate?

So far, the holding of conferences aimed at reducing hatred has not even been considered. How then shall and can one ban hatred from people's hearts — or at least reduce it? If we succeed in reducing this hatred in individuals, then politicians — who are paying increased attention to people's feelings and also incorporating this in their policies — will see to it that more emphasis is placed on the importance of tolerance in our societies. The younger generation must be warned against prejudice, especially against the prejudice of racial hatred, which has always led only to immeasurable human suffering.

Until recently we could still believe that wars could be prevented if conflicts were solved through talks and agreements, under the motto: "As long as talks are going on, there will be no shooting." Today, however, in the former Yugoslavia we are made to see hatred gaining the

upper hand again and becoming the motivating force for the most atrocious deeds.

Please allow me to tell you about an institution in Los Angeles that was named after me. The Simon Wiesenthal Center has built a large museum called the "Museum of Tolerance". If you have an opportunity to visit this Museum, you will be vividly informed about human-rights violations and genocide — not only about the Holocaust against the Jews, but also about the genocide against the Armenians, the people of Cambodia, and so on. The Museum's impressive audio-visual presentations implore the visitor to ask: "How can we prevent a repetition of such crimes in the future?" At the exit of the Museum stands a sign with the answer spelled out in large neon letters: "TOLERANCE". Tolerance is the prerequisite for the peaceful coexistence of all people on this Earth and the only alternative to the hatred that led to the horrible crimes against humanity. Hatred is the evil opposite of tolerance. Hatred instils in the young the concept of an enemy even in early years; it leads to radical words which are then followed by radical action.

I would therefore like to make the following proposal: Let us try to organize a worldwide conference aimed at reducing hate. Technology without hatred can be so very beneficial for mankind, but in conjunction with hatred it leads to disaster. The most important participants in such a conference — which should of course be held under the patronage of the United Nations — would be representatives of the monotheistic and other religions. Through religious networks the greater part of mankind could be reached. The representatives of the various religions, in keeping with their moral duties, would work for mutual respect and support among men against hatred. By spreading positive messages in churches, temples, mosques and synagogues, they can reach more people than all political parties put together. If religious representatives can agree to make the gradual elimination of hatred a major common concern, they will also find ways of informing and influencing their believers throughout the world.

Being an Austrian, I could imagine such an international conference taking place in our small country, located at the centre of Europe. In the course of its history, Austria has frequently been the scene of hate; today, however, it lives in perfect amity with all its neighbours, unstrained by any claims on lands outside its existing borders. Our country is an obvious international meeting-place, having often been the site of international events in the past. Moreover, all steps to strengthen tolerance and reduce hate would be actively supported by Austria's Government and its population. In this connection, I should like to point out that in the past 50 years the small republic of Austria, in contrast to other, significantly larger countries, has achieved great things where humanitarian aid for refugees — the most unfortunate victims of hate — is concerned.

I should personally be very pleased if my proposal to hold such a conference in Vienna were to be accepted by the representatives of other countries who have spoken, or will speak, to this Assembly on this occasion to mark the Year for Tolerance. As a survivor of the Nazi period — my wife and I lost 89 family members in the Holocaust — I have dedicated my life to the struggle for justice. The title of my last book is *Justice, Not Vengeance*, because my work was never motivated by hate or revenge. I would therefore feel very honoured if many people of good will and with the firm intention to conquer the hate in this world were to come to Vienna to take part in a conference having this aim.

I thank the Assembly kindly for its attention and convey to it warm greetings from the people and the Government of Austria. And I promise that we will continue to work for tolerance and human rights.

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of Georgia.

**Mr. Chkheidze** (Georgia) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to take this opportunity once again to present my respects to you, Sir, and to my colleagues who, together with you, have organized the work of the Commemorative Session.

Today's meeting is especially significant. The ideals of the Year for Tolerance proclaimed by the United Nations are the very principles and way of life that have enabled my people to survive during their long history and to preserve for world civilization their unique culture and a multitude of monuments, three of which are included on the list of 29 monuments that constitute a world heritage.

Having endured repeated and devastating invasions, Georgia again and again rose from the ashes without losing any of its inherent tolerance and respect for other nations and religions. Islam and Judaism long ago found a place in a State that was Christian from the fourth century on, and more than 80 ethnic groups retained and developed their cultures — not to mention the political

rights accorded national minorities. Is this not an example of tolerance and of a culture of mutual understanding and mutual enrichment?

At the same time, Georgia's example proves that traditions and a culture of communication are not enough by themselves. Alas, the time bombs planted at the inception of the Soviet Union have exploded.

Aggressive separatism, well prepared and organized, took us unawares. The Communist slogans of the separatists, directed against the drive for independence, provoked bloodshed, creating fertile ground for ethnic confrontation. The history of the so-called Abkhazian conflict in Georgia is well known to the international community.

The resolutions and appeals of authoritative international organs are falling on deaf ears. Hundreds of thousands of people have become refugees in the territory of their own homeland and have lost their kith and kin. The tragedy of the situation is aggravated by the fact that the next generation of the two peoples have developed hatred towards each other.

The example of Georgia has shown that the roots of intolerance must be sought not only in poverty and ignorance, in vainglory and fear, or in prejudices generated by ignorance, but also in the political nature of conflicts.

The ideals of tolerance require not only declarations, but also the most active defence. The multiplication of these ideals and finding resources for that purpose will be repaid a thousandfold in the future. At the same time, these efforts must be commensurate with the heavy burden and the difficult mission that must be assumed by our generation and today's world community.

This implies the most severe approach to evil-doers, to those extremist forces that threaten security and send our children to war. All mechanisms must be activated, ranging from the prosecution of specific individuals in courts of law to the economic and political isolation of the sources of hatred, including, in extreme cases, coercive measures. The task of a peacemaker is arduous but blessed.

In keeping with the letter and the spirit of today's meeting, I should like to underline the position of my Government, which is that of devotion to the peaceful settlement of all conflicts. We still hope that reason will prevail over insanity. We fully realize that all wars, in the final analysis, were lost by all the participants. Our common task is to develop a culture of tolerance as the manifestation of the new global interdependence, where the security of us all is based on understanding, trust and cooperation.

Georgia, aware of the significance of the Year for Tolerance, was able to organize an international forum dedicated to this event. With the help of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, an international forum for "For Solidarity Against Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures" was held in Tbilisi. It brought together some 150 cultural figures from 40 countries. The documents of this forum have been circulated as General Assembly documents A/50/173 and A/50/446.

The Istanbul Symposium dedicated to the Year for Tolerance was also an important event. Other efforts have evidently also been made to commemorate the Year for Tolerance appropriately, and programmes of action have been worked out in accord with the programmes of the international conferences held under United Nations auspices, and with the Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000. They are aimed at establishing and consolidating the ideals of tolerance, and they deserve the most careful attention and support in every way, in particular the programmes that provide for youth to contribute to bringing peoples together.

There is a need to approach in greater depth the question of enhancing the role of the intellectual professionals, women's organizations and religious leaders in the struggle against intolerance, especially in regions of conflict. International festivals must be encouraged more actively. The language of love and understanding should be carried to the most troubled parts of our world.

The Tbilisi forum is judged by everyone who took part in it as a contribution, however small, to securing a peaceful future for all people, to building a safer, fairer and more humane world.

We believe that the idea of a general confirmation of tolerance as a priority would enjoy considerable support should we proclaim an international day of tolerance and forgiveness with wide-ranging publicity for preparations at both the national and the international levels. We would enlist support by calling on religious and relevant non-governmental organizations around the world to help to celebrate this day as it should be celebrated, a day which would unite the ideals of all the

religions of the world and the nature of mankind — which is to love and to create for the cause of love.

**The Acting President**: I now call on the representative of Peru.

**Mr. Guillén** (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation has attached great importance to the commemoration of the United Nations Year for Tolerance. In 1994, we co-sponsored resolution 49/213, and today we are speaking not only to commemorate the international Year for Tolerance but also to reaffirm our desire to see the international community promote tolerance as a way of life.

As the Charter of the United Nations states in its preamble, "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours" are among the aims to be accomplished in order to prevent wars and maintain peace, to reaffirm the worth of the human person, and to establish conditions under which justice can be maintained and social progress can be promoted.

Moreover, the principle of tolerance, understood not as indifference, concession or condescension but as openness, respect, solidarity, civilized coexistence, pluralism, and freedom of conscience and religion, is expressed in the basic instruments of international law which govern international relations between States and the universal standards of respect for the rights of the person, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself.

Accordingly, we encourage the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), whose General Conference, by a mandate of the General Assembly, recently developed and approved the guidelines and declaration of principles on tolerance, which my country now pledges to respect and carry out, since the practice and promotion of tolerance are a solid basis for life within a society and necessary to guarantee peace and economic and social development.

Children and youth are often exposed to conflicts over which they have no control. It is therefore important that our work should begin with education as to the importance of solving problems without resorting to violence. In this context, education plays a decisive role and requires a comprehensive approach. Only the firm commitment of members of the international community to promote respect for peace, peaceful international coexistence, the international legal order and respect for treaties can enable children and young people to thrive in a climate which is conducive to mutual respect and in which there is no room for feelings of hostility and hatred that can for generations affect the relations of peace and development that should exist between peoples. In our opinion, this is all also part of the international responsibilities which States assume upon signing the United Nations Charter and becoming Members of this Organization.

We must teach the rejection of intolerance and violence, and we must also encourage constructive dialogue, understanding and friendship between nations and ethnic and religious groups. In that way, we will finally be able to build a culture of peace at the global level, in which education mirroring this will be based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, rejection of violence and all forms of discrimination, and support for the principles of justice, solidarity and mutual understanding.

**The Acting President**: I now call on the representative of Slovenia.

**Mr. Türk** (Slovenia): Today's commemorative meeting of the General Assembly is an occasion of particular importance. It is devoted to tolerance, a universally shared value which transcends the needs of any particular region, of any cultural or religious tradition and of any political system. It is universal and perhaps most precious in a time of rapid change — such as the time in which we live.

More than 200 years ago, in 1762, Voltaire, the great French philosopher and one of the founding fathers of the doctrine of human rights, wrote his seminal treatise on tolerance. He proved beyond doubt that tolerance is essential for peace and prosperity. As such, it has a profound importance for every society and for mankind as a whole. The concept of the wisdom of tolerance — comprehensively expressed by Voltaire — had been shared, and indeed preceded by, the teaching of other philosophers and had already been a part of the religious tradition professed by all major religions of the world. Its fundamental importance, therefore, was not a mere invention, nor had it been imposed.

Understood as a value which encompasses universal pluralism and a genuine acceptance of cultural diversity, the idea of tolerance represents, first of all, a valuable intellectual and practical framework within which the vitally important norms of a good society and a peaceful world can be developed.

The United Nations has in its first 50 years of existence contributed an important share to the effort to build such a world. In retrospect, one may say that the larger part of that share has been contributed at the level of normative regulation, while much is left to be desired at the practical level of implementation. The evolution of norms of international law has been most dynamic in our time, a fact which is to a large measure due to the work of the United Nations. Furthermore, and perhaps even more important, the United Nations has succeeded in developing a coherent system of norms necessary for the protection and promotion of human rights. The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, reaffirmed the universality of these norms.

It is also understood that universality does not mean uniformity and that the process of the implementation of universal norms must provide space for instruments which contribute to the realization — that is, the real attainment — of these norms in specific circumstances in different regions. In the coming decades of the United Nations, the development and functioning of such instruments will be among the most important challenges facing the Organization.

The challenge to the actual attainment of the postulate of tolerance is often expressed in the form of the following question: What needs to be done when a society — or the international community as a whole — is confronted with the intolerant? Sometimes the importance of this question is radicalized by the fact that the intolerant propagate or even use violence in pursuit of an agenda of intolerance.

Two weeks ago, the world witnessed the assassination of a political leader who laboured for peace and a permanent political arrangement based on the ideal of mutual tolerance and friendship among peoples that had been at war for decades.

The armed conflicts of our time are the most brutal expression of intolerance and a stark reminder that the membrane of the norms of tolerance and civilized behaviour is still thin and can be quickly destroyed.

How should the organized international community react to these challenges? Again, the wisdom of philosophers like Voltaire is helpful: When intolerance reaches criminal proportions it cannot be accepted or condoned. Obviously, in defining what is criminal, such principles as legitimacy, legality and proportionality must be observed. Furthermore, any prosecution of criminals must observe all the requirements of due process of law. However, not for a single moment should there be any doubt that those responsible for crimes resulting from intolerance will be prosecuted and punished irrespective of the religious or political convictions which may have motivated them.

There comes a time when a wide range of existential issues for mankind are reflected in a single situation. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is such a situation today. It is a test case of the maturity of the international community, and much of our common future will depend on the way that situation is treated. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina began as a result of plans for territorial aggrandizement and the nationalistic intolerance unleashed in that context. It has resulted in genocide of the Muslim people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a situation in which it will be most difficult to establish real peace.

If real peace is to be established, it is absolutely vital that tolerance be restored, which in turn requires both the prosecution and the punishment of persons responsible for the genocide and for other gross violations of international humanitarian law. I emphasize that no political compromises can be accepted in this regard.

It is sometimes alleged that the genocide in Bosnia cannot be compared with the Holocaust against the Jews in the Second World War, and that there are guilty individuals on all sides in the war in Bosnia. While this is true, it should not obfuscate the essence of the issues at hand, and the essence is this: that the international community cannot afford not to punish the perpetrators of a genocide the facts of which are proven beyond reasonable doubt. Violations of the basic principles upon which the universality of human rights rests have to be rejected in an effective and meaningful way. Any form of acceptance of what has been called in the press an "even distribution of guilt", which has been hitherto advocated by some, would undermine the credibility of the international community. Instead, the principle of the criminal responsibility of individuals, irrespective of their rank or status, must be upheld in the interest of peace.

Therefore, if the very basis upon which the General Assembly is today discussing the importance of tolerance is to be upheld, the international community must respond with determination and vision to the tragic case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a necessary condition for making the efforts for the implementation of human

rights credible and the ideal of tolerance truly relevant in real life.

**The Acting President:** I call next on the representative of Andorra.

**Mr. Minoves-Triquell** (Andorra) (*interpretation from French*): Today I am a happy man, able in this Hall to proclaim the merits of tolerance. I was born, raised and grew up in a small country in the Pyrenees, the Principality of Andorra. Ours is a State formed by peace, by 700 years of peace and freedom. Owing to our isolation and to our small size in a world of giants, owing to the roughness of the conditions in which they lived, my ancestors had to learn, and did learn, to live as a community and to respect others. Owing to our location in a border area ever marked by war and conflict, we had to learn, and did learn, to practice the art of hospitality, to welcome refugees, to engage in diplomacy and dialogue. Like many of my colleagues in this Hall, from countries large and small, I had the good fortune to be raised in an environment that bred tolerance, thanks to the history of my country and to the teachings of my family and my teachers. And I therefore welcome, on behalf of my fellow Andorrans and of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, the occasion that brings us together today, on 21 November.

*Mr. Peerthum (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Only a few weeks ago I spoke to the General Assembly of the importance of youth and education. I must reiterate how critical it is that the youth of the third millennium, which we are approaching, be educated in a spirit of tolerance and reason. Mankind has destructive capabilities that sometimes exceed our understanding. As we approach the end of the century — of the millennium, indeed — it is fashionable to cry fatalism. I am not among those who do this. But who can guarantee that human beings, guided by their instincts and passions and by the deep-seated energies that inspire them as often to the noblest of actions as to the most villainous of atrocities, will not face off some time during the next thousand years, with the ultimate ferocity made possible by present-day technical capabilities?

In my humble opinion, tolerance, respect for others, and, indeed, the famous positive-sum game which shows that humans are not merely predators of their fellow humans, constitute the most telling response to that question. That is why I firmly advocate that young people be educated in these values at the risk of seeming intolerant of those who disagree with them. Tolerance is a virtue, a moral value that the United Nations has an mandate to disseminate. After all — to the disgruntlement of those who do not share the values of the United Nations — the Organization was, as my Minister for Foreign Affairs observed during the general debate, founded on the basis of solid values, at the close of the Second World War, in the wake of the Holocaust which Mr. Wiesenthal just evoked, at a time when evil, having lately prevailed, gave way to the glowing good of the concepts of peace, tolerance and development: the pillars of the United Nations.

M.S. Bates wrote these well-framed words:

(*Spoke in English*)

"I shall not try to write the history of intolerance: that would be to write the history of the world".

(*Spoke in French*)

During the history shared by all mankind since the dawn of time, intolerance has seemed natural, even desirable: as Bossuet put it, why be tolerant of those who disagree when one is certain of one's beliefs or actions — especially when that certainty is of Divine origin?

In the seventeenth century, John Locke began to ponder the nature of religious intolerance. His *Epistola de Tolerantia* was one of the first modern attempts to articulate the concept of tolerance. That beginning was confined to intolerance in religion, and even then went no further than demonstrating the irrationality of intolerance, which, according to Locke, is of no value to the intolerant in really changing the inner beliefs of those they persecute.

As Ambassador Danilo Türk of Slovenia has already aptly pointed out, some decades later Voltaire, in his *Treaty on Tolerance* — after denouncing the hasty execution of Jean Calas, a member of a religious minority in Toulouse who had been wrongly accused of murdering his son — added that the supposed right to intolerance was

"absurd and barbaric; it is the law of the tiger — worse, indeed, since tigers kill in order to eat, whereas we crush each other for the sake of paragraphs."

Voltaire proclaimed as a major governing principle of the law of nature — and for him therefore of the law of man — the maxim: "Do not do unto others what you do not want done to yourself". Is not that the first principle of tolerance, as nurtured in various religious traditions? Religions often the guardians of certainties, have also been a philosophical source of tolerance — a source that we should acknowledge and put to use in order to avoid the fanaticisms, which, human nature being what it is, have a tendency to flourish when least expected.

In 1776, Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, wrote:

*(spoke in English)*

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

*(spoke in French)*

In the nineteenth century John Stuart Mill spoke not so much of tolerance as of liberty. His argument in support of tolerance is based on liberty. He starts from a very positive conception of the diversity that is so natural among human beings, and notes that unless liberty in society is affirmed, individuals will be compelled by social opinion and intolerant laws to lose themselves in uniformity and the banality of similarity, which will hinder progress.

For Mill, tolerance is necessary because liberty directly determines the autonomy of the individual. Obviously, even for him there are limits to this liberty and to tolerance. In his *Essay on Liberty*, he wrote:

*(spoke in English)*

"In the conduct of human beings towards one another, it is necessary that general rules should for the most part be observed, in order that people may know what they have to expect; but in each person's own concerns, his individual spontaneity is entitled to free exercise."

*(spoke in French)*

Let us think for a few moments about the brief remarks that follow. The inalienability of the liberty of the individual underlies the internationally accepted concepts which, at the end of the twentieth century, constitute the norms of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in our quest for human dignity. Human rights, which are frequently the basis for action in the Third Committee of the General Assembly, presuppose acceptance of individual liberty as a precious possession, and hence tolerance of the ideas or actions of human beings, provided that they do not strike at that liberty or at the integrity and dignity of another human being. Thus, one must know how to be intolerant towards intolerance, for tolerance's sake.

In general terms, as long as Peter or Paul does me no harm, it should matter little to me if he behaves in a way that disgusts me or that my own beliefs lead me to think is morally wrong. I can talk to him and explain my views, but in no case can I become intolerant, as that would carry the seeds of confrontation.

I cannot state my position any more clearly than by saying that I am firmly on the side of tolerance. But, paradoxically, those of us who have come together today to celebrate tolerance must take great care to ensure that it becomes more and more widespread and that those who want to make it disappear — those who took action in Nigeria a few days ago, those who justified the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, or those responsible for the death of Prime Minister Rabin in Israel — that all those and others do not achieve their aim. Just as the democracies needed courage and endurance in this century to overcome the great dangers of totalitarianism, the partisans of tolerance will need courage and endurance in the face of the forces of obscurantism.

In the course of this statement I have referred to philosophers who have reflected on tolerance and liberty. During this century, many others have taken up the subject — particularly Rawls, but also, for example, Raz, Nozick and Dworkin, all of whom have re-examined Mill's theories using new criteria to assess them. Susan Mendus, in *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism*, rightly points out that human beings are not merely independent and free, as we understand from the work of Mill, but also interdependent because they live in society. She says:

*(spoke in English)*

"We should tolerate — and more than tolerate — if we expect to create a society in which people can identify their good with the good of others, and come to feel that they speak through their society and that it speaks for them."

*(spoke in French)*

Mendus's argument deserves more attention and a more critical approach than are possible in a brief statement. Let me, however, observe that her assertion that "We should ... more than tolerate" is very appealing.

I began my speech by saying that I am a happy man — happy with my passion for tolerance, and happy to be able to express it among the delegations here. Happiness — the happiness which Thomas Jefferson inscribed in the Declaration of Independence — is a deeply personal thing; at the most we manage to define what makes us unhappy, but not what brings Happiness — with a capital letter. Tolerance is perhaps not sufficient, since the word itself implies that one does not approve of what one is tolerating. To be happy, people need respect and esteem as well. Of course we must argue for tolerance, but, if we still have some energy left, we can also try to do a little more and to spread love.

**The Acting President**: I call on the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Yaacobi** (Israel): The principal commitment of the international community to tolerance was enshrined in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter. The Member States committed themselves to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours. The founders of this body understood that only by encouraging tolerance among the peoples of the world could the scourge of war be eliminated. Only thus could the world hope to survive and progress.

We come from different parts of the world. We differ in colour, in culture, in religion. We have different beliefs and opinions, but all of us are human beings.

Judaism places the notion of tolerance and respect for others as one of its highest ideals. Rabbi Akiva, the great Jewish sage, was once approached by a non-Jew who wished to convert to Judaism. Said the wise Rabbi:

> "The only thing you must learn: Do not unto your fellow what is hateful to yourself."

Judaism has always encouraged discussion and disagreement, but within the bounds of tolerance. Indeed, our entire oral law, the Talmud, is based on the discourse between the schools of thought *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shamai*. The debates between the two schools, no matter how heated, were confined to the realm of discussion. Thus, the murderer of Yitzhak Rabin acted in complete contravention of the morals and principles of Judaism. He removed himself from the entire Jewish people.

Our history is full of tragic examples of mistreatment at the hands of others. We have felt the pain of intolerance and we have learned its bitter lessons.

Prejudice against Jews reached its climax in the first half of this century. In the 1930s, the Nazis of Germany came to power espousing a racist ideology based on the superiority of one group over another. Jews, along with several other groups, were singled out by the Nazis for annihilation. Between 1939 and 1945, six million Jews were exterminated by the Nazis for the sole crime of having been born Jewish.

The return of the Jewish people to its homeland in Israel was based on the idea of creating a moral and just society in which equality and mutual respect would prevail. In its Declaration of Independence, the State of Israel promised to uphold the full social and political equality of all of its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex.

To our detriment, our region has known many years of hatred and war. Israel has fought for many years in order to achieve a lasting and equitable peace with its neighbours based on coexistence and mutual respect.

During the past three years, we have witnessed a dramatic change in the prospects for peace in the Middle East. Our goal is to transform the agreements being forged on the ground today into real cooperation and neighbourly relations tomorrow.

Sadly, the progress achieved between Israel and its neighbours over the past several years has been ignored by some in our region. There are still those who refuse to accept the new reality. There are radicals and extremists on both sides. There are those who place bombs on buses or who attempt through murder and other inhuman actions to stop the due process of peace. These people are out of touch with the new reality. They represent a fanatic approach of hatred and political myopia.

As recent events in the Middle East have proved, it is a slippery slope from angry rhetoric to violent actions. The dehumanization of a nation or a group of people on the basis of their beliefs or view of the world cannot be reconciled with any definition of tolerance. The world

has witnessed these phenomena too many times during the twentieth century. The international community must be aware that violent rhetoric often leads to violent action. We must accept the responsibility to keep disputes within democratic tolerance.

During this violent century, some of the world's greatest leaders have been brutally taken from us by the enemies of peace and progress. Mahatma Gandhi, Anwar al-Sadat, Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy were all snuffed out by assassins' bullets.

I have mentioned already that two weeks ago, to our great sorrow, this happened in Israel. The murder of Prime Minister Rabin was an act of fanatics, of fundamentalists, of radicals. The murderer stands outside the scope of Judaism, universal morality and democratic tolerance. He murdered a great statesman, a courageous warrior for peace, a man of great integrity and devotion. Yitzhak Rabin will be missed not only by Israel and the entire Jewish people, but by peoples throughout the Middle East and the whole world. His path towards peace and reconciliation will be continued; his vision will be fulfilled.

There is no coming to terms with what has happened. We can only fight against it by educating our children, by raising our voices in protest, by refusing to surrender to hatred and intolerance and by enhancing peace.

The Year for Tolerance has come to an end, but the need for tolerance has not. The international community must remain committed not to the notion of tolerance, but to its attainment on a day-to-day basis.

**The Acting President**: I call on the representative of Myanmar.

**Mr. Mra** (Myanmar): Half a century ago, intolerance among nations was at its peak, with certain nations trying to impose their will on others. As a result, a savage and violent war ensued and untold sorrow was brought upon mankind. Waking up to the vicious consequences of the lack of tolerance in inter-State relations, humanity enshrined the virtue of tolerance in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter and prescribed the practice of tolerance among nations as the primary means of achieving the aim of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

With the end of the cold war, ideological confrontation was replaced by a new global order in which international security has been threatened with increasing conflicts of various natures. Intolerance reared its vicious head again as a new sense of freedom from ideological bondage led to mounting tensions and strife in many parts of the world.

In these circumstances, it is imperative to promote the spirit of tolerance and to strengthen its practice. It is therefore most fitting for the United Nations to have been able to proclaim 1995 as United Nations Year for Tolerance at the suggestion of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In this regard, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Director-General of UNESCO for the extensive efforts which he has made for the programme of the Year and his appeals and speeches addressing the question of tolerance. My delegation also thanks other United Nations agencies that have been involved in promoting the concept of tolerance. Thanks to their concerted efforts, the danger of intolerance and its manifestations has been made clearer to the world community.

Many religions and various thinkers of all ages have preached tolerance and its virtues over many centuries. No one has ever denied that tolerance at all levels is beneficial. It has now been widely and undeniably recognized that tolerance is essential for the establishment and maintenance of world peace and prosperity. While my delegation is wholly supportive of attempts now being made to instil the spirit of tolerance in the mind of the individual, we hold that tolerance, as a factor for peace, should be practised to the fullest extent possible in inter-State relations.

To judge by history, this is the area where intolerance has found its full expression. Attempts to impose a different system of values and norms on another country should be avoided, in recognition of the diversity in cultures, beliefs and lifestyles. To do otherwise would be tantamount to disregard for and contempt of values and norms different from one's own. We hope that understanding of and respect for the cultures, beliefs and lifestyles of other countries will also be the focus of our attempts in establishing the culture of tolerance.

Myanmar is a society with a culture of tolerance. Myanmar culture goes back many centuries. Gentleness, compassion and tolerance are its hallmarks. Religious tolerance is a deep-rooted social and cultural trait in Myanmar which every citizen of the land upholds and observes. Although a majority of Myanmar nationals are

Buddhists, other major religions — Islam, Christianity and Hinduism — flourish alongside Buddhism.

Intolerance based on ethnicity is a factor in the resurgence of ethnic-nationalist conflicts around the world. If a stable and peaceful world is to be bequeathed to posterity, ways must be explored and identified to tackle this most intractable issue facing us on the threshold of the twenty-first century. We believe that wise and far-sighted policy moves by the Governments concerned are urgently needed.

Myanmar is made up of 135 national races. For reasons both historical and geographical, some of Myanmar's national races were marginalized and excluded from its national life. Their long exclusion from the mainstream of Myanmar society had been cause for mistrust and misunderstanding. For these reasons, reintegration of our national brethren into the national life of the country has become a top priority on the national political agenda of Myanmar. Towards that end, the Government has taken energetic and comprehensive measures for the development of border areas and national races since May 1989. The Government has set up a separate ministry — the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs — and expended over 2,842 million kyats (US$ 400 million) for infrastructure-building in the border areas. To prevent the continued marginalization of our national races, the Government has, among other things, provided the national races with access to communication systems and information services. In addition, the Government has built more roads and bridges in border areas than had been done in the past. We believe that these measures will contribute towards greater understanding and tolerance among the national races.

United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/213 requests UNESCO to prepare for the conclusion of the Year a declaration of principles and a programme of action as a follow-up to the Year, and to submit them to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are pleased to learn that UNESCO has now adopted the Declaration of Principles.

My delegation believes that establishment of a culture of tolerance in place of a culture of violence is a long-term and monumental task which will have to be carried out until such a time as there no longer remains room in our collective consciousness for intolerance and violence. In this regard, we attach great importance to the role of education, through which the youth of the world can be taught ethical thinking and can be made to realize the virtues of tolerance and peace.

It is our collective moral duty to contain and stop the spread of intolerance. As the world has become more democratic and interdependent, tolerance has become an indispensable virtue. It has also become a condition for the survival of mankind, as rightly pointed out during the Year. With the proclamation of the Year and the holding of various forums for the Year, it appears that we have been able to alert the international community to the profound dangers of intolerance and its manifestations. My delegation believes that we have reached a stage where we should start taking concrete steps for the establishment of an enduring culture of tolerance and peace.

**The Acting President**: I call on the representative of the United States of America.

**Mrs. Moutoussamy-Ashe** (United States): As we observe the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is important to recognize and celebrate the principles deeply rooted in the foundation of this institution, especially those of human rights. Never before have the aspirations of people around the world for democracy, justice and peace been so fully articulated.

During this time of celebration, however, we must not forget that the simple message of tolerance, which is enshrined in the world's religions, and which underpins civil and political rights, cannot be taken for granted. There are those who would take to the air-waves to send bloodthirsty messages and incite listeners to murder and destruction; there are hate crimes, which expose the ugly face of intolerance and racism in places that we might otherwise consider idyllic. We are all a long way from knowing how to live peaceably with one another — which is what tolerance is all about.

A commitment to tolerance and human rights lies at the heart of the United States. Our country was born in the promise of universal freedom and settled by people from all over the world. In fact, ours is probably the most ethnically and religiously diverse nation in the world. This diversity fostered a commitment to tolerance, reflected in the Constitution and the structure of our democratic system of government. Enshrined in the United States system of law are the following rights: political and civil rights that enable all people to practice their own culture; the right of all persons, members of minorities or otherwise, to practice their own religion;

the freedom of opinion and expression; the freedom of association and assembly; and equality under the law.

We would be the first to admit that our laws and institutions have had their difficult moments during our history, and that even today they bear improving. We recognize that the struggle to create and maintain a society with liberty and justice for all is an ongoing process. But I would highlight these rights and freedoms, which allow Americans to promote and exercise tolerance in their personal and political lives. They have been tested time after time, not only here, but in all parts of the world, and they have withstood each test, confirming over and over that there is a universal human element at their core.

The Vienna Declaration emphasized that human rights education, training and public information were essential for stable and harmonious relations between communities. The American education system incorporates instruction in civil and political rights, from grammar and secondary school through the college and university levels, to ensure that citizens are aware of their rights. Furthermore, all human rights treaties can be readily obtained from the Government or virtually any public or private library.

I cannot neglect the vital role played by non-governmental organizations in keeping the United States system true to its ideals. Thousands of such organizations serve as watchdogs, through education, through reporting and through the defence of human rights in our legal system.

Overseas, the United States is firmly committed to the protection and promotion of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world. The United States is at present a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. Both of these instruments provide standards which all countries should strive to meet in order to promote civil and peaceful societies.

In many regions of the world, radical nationalism is on the rise and threatens minorities of all types, particularly religious minorities. The United States defends religious freedom internationally on many levels. At the United Nations and in other international forums we have taken the lead to oppose the egregious record of several countries. Similarly, in bilateral meetings we raise our concerns about disturbing trends of religious intolerance. We have devised a system which educates United States political asylum officers about the situation of religious groups around the world, ensuring people's rights to seek asylum.

The United States welcomes the declaration of the Year for Tolerance and we look forward to working with the United Nations and other organizations to continue the promotion of tolerance and human rights, which are essential elements of peace and democracy.

Although we are coming to the end of the Year for Tolerance, we will not succeed in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all unless we continue to celebrate tolerance in the future. The United Nations Year for Tolerance is not only a tribute and commitment to human rights, but is a tribute and commitment to those, seen and unseen, who have stood in the face of intolerance and fought back with dignity. We must not forget their faces, or their struggle. We must continue to honour their commitment to human rights with the same determination, because it is now our own.

A discussion of tolerance and respect for civil and political rights brings me to a subject of grave concern to my Government.

The United States abhors the recent acts of the Nigerian Government. The executions on 10 November of environmental and human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others violated numerous provisions of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights to which Nigeria is a party. The failure of the Nigerian Government to convict these individuals after a fair trial, embodying due process of law, calls into question the Abacha regime's commitment to restore Nigeria to democracy and the rule of law. Ultimately, these acts underscore the regime's refusal to abide by the most basic international standards of human rights.

In response to the outrages committed by the Nigerian military regime by these executions, my Government has taken a number of unilateral steps. These include the recall of the United States Ambassador in Lagos; a ban on the sale to Nigeria of military goods and services, and on repairs; and an extension of our ban on visas, which currently prohibits the entry into the United States of senior military officials and senior Government officials and their families, to include also all military officers and civilians who actively formulate, implement or benefit from the policies that impede Nigeria's transition to democracy.

By these measures we wish to signal to Nigeria's military Government that it must not be permitted to engage in conduct against its citizens that violate international norms of justice and decency, and that the time has come for it to expedite the transition to democratic rule. The General Assembly should not allow those intolerable actions to pass by unnoticed. We urge all Member States to join the United States in taking similar unilateral steps against the Nigerian regime. My Government will be working with other delegations which share our sense of outrage to formulate an appropriate collective response.

**The Acting President:** I now call on the representative of India.

**Mr. Singla** (India): It is not just a fortuitous coincidence that the international Year for Tolerance in 1995 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, India's greatest leader and the twentieth century's greatest apostle of non-violence and tolerance. The celebrating and observance of the Year for Tolerance enjoin us to recall that if Member States are to lead the United Nations to successfully maintain international peace and security there is only one path to follow, and that is the path of tolerance and non-violence.

The United Nations Year for Tolerance was conceived in the wake of the post-cold-war surge in conflicts arising out of the phenomenon of intolerance based on ethnic, religious or national extremism in recent years. India was a sponsor of this proposal by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from the outset. India joined in this very important endeavour because it is my delegation's conviction that any new world order has to be based on tolerance for each other's viewpoints, social and cultural differences, religious diversity and ideological and other beliefs. If the new world order is to be a lasting one, it cannot be predicated on coercion, threats, sanctions or the use of force.

Tolerance has many aspects, and it is necessary to implement each one of those if the efforts of the United Nations to keep peace are to succeed. The basic cause of most conflicts in which the United Nations has been forced to intervene has been intolerance. The situation the United Nations has faced in the former Yugoslavia illustrates this reality most graphically. Hostility and intolerance have divided a formerly vibrant nation. In this United Nations Year for Tolerance an important lesson that we in the United Nations need to imbibe is that conflict-prevention or peace can be achieved not through encouraging intolerance and violence which follows, but through support for pluralism, multi-ethnic societies and democratic mechanisms which tolerate diversity.

Tolerance means living together in harmony to profit from diversity, not killing each other to consolidate differences. It is unfortunate that in their often misguided enthusiasm to rush into peace-keeping, the more powerful members of the United Nations have ignored this basic wisdom that is part of our civilization and cultures. Tolerance implies that the United Nations should take a longer-term, wider view of how the world order should evolve, rather than the short-term view of conflicts, which invariably ends up in seeking solutions through military intervention.

Above all, within the United Nations there is a need for tolerance. The same democratic principles as nations apply in their own countries to get the widest possible consensus for policy-making need to be practised in this international Organization of diverse big and small countries.

India from the beginning of civilization has been a land open to foreign peoples, influences, ideas and cultures. Our most ancient texts spoke of the place of man, as only one of the creations in the universe and the need for him to live in harmony with other creatures of nature. Our philosophers and rulers have recognized at all times that tolerance for another human being is not only a virtue, but a necessity in any civilized and just society. Non-violence was preached in India by Lord Mahavira and Lord Buddha more than 2,500 years ago; Indian emperors, such as Ashoka, renounced war; others, such as Akbar, propagated the unifying oneness in all great thought and beliefs.

On 16 November 1995 a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance was adopted by UNESCO in Paris. We would commend to all delegations study of this Declaration and its implementation in our common pursuit of peace, which must be based on non-violence and tolerance.

The value of tolerance and its importance in international affairs needs to be widely recognized and promoted. Considering the crucial role which the mass media play today in influencing policies, my delegation would appeal to the media to play a pro-active role in promoting tolerance and reducing conflicts. While

reporting on conflict-situations, the media should primarily focus on conflict-reduction and resolution through tolerance — not on promoting hatred or encouraging dissension to make more interesting copy.

In this context, we strongly support the idea of human rights education at all levels. Tolerance should be taught to children in all countries at an early age. Here the study of other cultures cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Lack of such teaching and knowledge, even in countries that can well afford them, particularly at the school level, gives rise to a sense of false superiority which could lead to hostility and intolerance in children and adults. Tolerance comes not only with understanding, but also with acceptance. The concept of equality is inherent in such acceptance. We should all benefit from the collective wisdom of every culture and way of life.

The role of the United Nations agencies, particularly of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNESCO, should be to focus on the idea that tolerance begins at home. Non-governmental organizations have played an important role in promoting communications and knowledge. We must beware of those organizations that preach hatred, violence and division, and we should have the courage to condemn them. In India, the non-governmental organizations have an important role in promoting inter-communal harmony, and the interests of disadvantaged groups such as women, children and the tribes. They recognize that the best way to promote these objectives is to work together with democratically elected Governments. This is in sharp contrast to several free-wheeling international non-governmental organizations that target democratic Governments and give solace to groups supporting intolerance and violence.

The importance of tolerance was recognized by the founding fathers of the United Nations. One of the ways that they laid down in the Charter to meet the objectives that they defined in the Preamble was the practice of tolerance and living together in peace with one another as good neighbours. The Indian classic "The Bhagvad Gita" defined certain virtues which form the very essence of tolerance:

> "Non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, serenity, aversion to fault-finding, sympathy for all beings, peace from greedy cravings, gentleness, modesty and steadiness".

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of Yemen.

**Mr. Alakwaa** (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As we commemorate today the United Nations Year for Tolerance we should recall the values, the norms and the lofty principles taught by our noble religion, Islam. Islam calls for tolerance, coexistence, fraternization, cooperation and forgiveness of offences. It is unfortunate indeed that there are some who would accuse this religion of things that are not of Islam. If there are some Muslims who, by their irresponsible behaviour which degenerates sometimes to the levels of fanaticism, violence and terrorism, do a disservice to Islam, this should not give licence to denigrators to accuse Islam of things that it is innocent of, things it does not teach, call for or encourage. Islam is a civilized religion of peace and love. In it there is a place for all shades of opinion. It calls for dialogue, for understanding and for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. In this respect, God has said:

> "And argue with them in ways that are best,"
>
> (Suza, 16, verse 125)
>
> "Then he between whom and thee was hatred becomes as it were thy friend and intimate."
>
> (Suza, 41, verse 34)

We acceded in the 1980s to the two international covenants and, regardless of economic, financial and technical difficulties, we seek to implement them, as well as other relevant international instruments that deal with issues of human rights, in a manner that would not contradict the principles of the Islamic Sharia, which guarantees for all their freedoms and fundamental rights.

Human rights committees, both public and private, have been set up in our country. They cooperate with the competent Government authorities in safeguarding and guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms, in the interests of the individual and society alike.

Beyond our national borders — in other words, on the international scene — we note some situations wherein the international community found itself obliged to intervene for obvious humanitarian reasons, and for that we are grateful indeed. However, we also note other situations in which humanitarian considerations got mixed up with political interests and thus called into doubt the credibility and impartiality of such intervention. There are also other cases wherein the international community showed hesitation and did not intervene promptly, so that when it did intervene, its intervention was too little too

late. There is, of course, the trampling of Arab human rights in the Arab territories that have continued to be occupied since 1967. In certain other situations, tardy intervention resulted in massacres and the rape of thousands of women and girls, as in the case of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The perpetrators of those crimes must be tried by the International Criminal Tribunal and duly punished.

In our view, the increasing awareness of the need to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms is closely and organically linked to and essential for the progress of society and the advancement of its members at the economic, political, cultural and social levels. We believe, therefore, that all these aspects must be borne in mind and addressed as a whole.

In conclusion, we should like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts, and in particular his recommendations on promoting the primacy of the rule of law and the need to help developing countries in this field. We hope that these recommendations, contained in document A/50/653, will be approved and implemented.

**The Acting President:** I now call on the representative of Romania.

**Mr. Mazilu** (Romania): I should like to say at the outset that my delegation welcomes this plenary debate on the United Nations Year for Tolerance. Also, we subscribe to the statement made by the delegation of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

At the same time, my delegation would like to comment on this remarkable event in international life. It is our firm belief that our task today is to exchange views and thoughts not only on the achievements of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, but also on both possible and necessary actions to be taken in the future in this field by the United Nations Member States, and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

First, regarding the Year's achievements, a great number and variety of international actions were organized during this period. This indicates the success of this useful and timely initiative. In previous years we all witnessed, and actively took part in, a series of big, historic changes that truly marked a new beginning in the strenuous efforts to achieve the noble ideals of the United Nations: peace, understanding and cooperation.

We believe that the most valuable gain in this respect is that the International Year for Tolerance has triggered, worldwide, regional and national activities that are to be continued and enriched in the coming years.

My country, Romania, has played, and continues to play, an active part in this course of action. Besides its continuous support for and participation in the international events organized by the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Romania undertook to thoroughly play its role in this respect at the regional and national levels.

First, together with other members of the Council of Europe, my country participated in the current work of the European Commission against racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance, and it is dedicated to strengthening guarantees against all forms of discrimination. The Commission is also evaluating the effectiveness of the range of measures taken by member States to combat these evil phenomena.

Secondly, in December 1994 youth representatives from all over Europe, including Romania, launched at Strasbourg the European youth campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance. In this respect, delegates of Romanian non-governmental organizations, all parliamentary political parties, youth organizations and governmental agencies decided to create a permanent foundation that has organized throughout the year colloquiums, seminars, workshops and especially "weeks of tolerance", with the participation of many young people from Romania and other countries.

Thirdly, this year, in May, Bucharest hosted the International Seminar on Tolerance, organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Council of Europe and the Government of Romania, in cooperation with UNESCO. It was the largest joint meeting of the members of these organizations in 1995 in this field. Benefiting from the participation of distinguished international personalities and representatives of more than 70 non-governmental organizations, this seminar marked — through exchanges of views and experience — the unfolding of the Year's campaign for tolerance, especially with regard to ways and means of promoting tolerance through the media, education and cultural activities in the daily life of local communities.

The participants concentrated their analysis on the necessary actions against intolerance and on the promotion of tolerance, including legal measures and involving law enforcement, local authorities and non-governmental organizations. The main topics were intolerance in all its aspects, such as racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, religious fundamentalism and aggressive nationalism; the role of civic society; the impact of public opinion; the importance of early warning; and actions at the national and international levels.

The complexity of the restoration of peace in many long-troubled regions has been pointed out. The new spirit of good-neighbourliness and the speedy expression and consolidation of democracy, as well as the rule of law, in countries of all continents have enhanced the protection and promotion of human rights. The growing awareness of global problems and of the need for increased cooperation and partnership in dealing with these problems have given rise to new challenges for the international community and all its actors.

It has been stressed that, as a result of years of oppression and tyranny, today, at the end of the cold war, some countries are still facing tensions between different groups. Ethnic, cultural, religious and social conflicts, unfortunately, still exist in many regions.

After the cold war, hopes were directed towards an appeased Europe and a peaceful world, in which everybody could live in respect, understanding and cooperation. But the geo-political map of Europe received a new face, and, in the place of yesterday's demons, new demons — hatred, aggression, non-tolerance — sprang up. According to the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Sweden's Uppsala University, between 1989 and 1994 at least 90 armed conflicts only four of which were inter-State conflicts, occurred in the world. The remaining 86 were civil wars over territorial and political issues, and ethnic and religious conflicts. As the President of Romania has pointed out, lasting peace and security in Europe could be built only on the basis of respect, understanding and cooperation among all countries in the process of their integration in the European structures. Romania lies at a crossroad where various cultures and civilizations interact and for this reason

> "the Romanian society has developed an open spirit of understanding and tolerance".

That was said at the International Seminar in May. During this important debate it was noted several times, very truly, that tolerance means respecting others' rights, learning to listen to, communicate with and understand others, appreciating cultural diversity and differences, being free from prejudices, rejecting extremism and separation and having a positive attitude towards others. Indeed, tolerance is a part of human rights culture, a part of the culture of peace.

The time has come to consolidate, both on the national and international levels, the human rights system, based on generally accepted standards and norms. As the United Nations, UNESCO and their Member States have pointed out the major significance of tolerance is as an indispensable corollary of democracy, but also as a tool for the long-term prevention of tension and conflicts and an important means of safeguarding peace.

It is our belief that the end of the United Nations Year for Tolerance does not mean also the end of United Nations actions for promoting tolerance as an essential factor for world peace. In our delegation's view, the experience gathered during the international Year for Tolerance should be used for our future activities, in order to heighten public awareness of the threat to peace presented by a lack of tolerance between nations, between communities, between individuals, even.

Taking into account that the end of the Year for Tolerance comes at a time when we are witnessing in some regions of the world a steady and, in some respects, even increasing number of acts of intolerance, our delegation considers it necessary that the United Nations, UNESCO and other international organizations should continue to focus their efforts, at least in the following three directions: first, to influence public opinion in favour of tolerance by demonstrating — through the media and through more efficient education — how tolerance is linked to the peaceful coexistence of all peoples and all segments of society; secondly, to deter and combat any act of intolerance, such as racism, xenophobia, discrimination, segregation and separatism, and to continue efforts to build the lives of our societies and communities on the basis of tolerance; and thirdly, to educate young people, inparticular, in the spirit of tolerance, of recognition and acceptance of individual differences, and in the spirit of the recognition that no single culture, nation or religion has the monopoly of knowledge or truth, and to demonstrate how each individual can fight against intolerance.

We have to do everything in our power to continue and develop United Nations initiatives to promote tolerance beyond 1995, so that education for tolerance may become a permanent concern on both the national and the international levels. As one of the world's greatest thinkers, François Marie Arouet de Voltaire, pointed out in 1763 in his famous *Treatise on Tolerance*, education for tolerance is a noble and permanent task of every society, and intolerance is an expression of primitive behaviour, and tolerance of educated and civilized behaviour.

My country reaffirms its commitment to fundamental ideals of the United Nations such as peace, understanding and cooperation. We are therefore determined to continue to work together with all other Member States in order to make our societies more tolerant, through respect, recognition and acceptance of the rights and freedoms of everyone.

**Programme of work**

*Mr. Pibulsonggram (Thailand), Vice-President, in the Chair.*

**The Acting President:** I should like to inform members that on Monday, 27 November, in the afternoon, agenda item 20, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", including sub-items (a) to (d), will be considered together with agenda item 154, "Participation of volunteers, 'White Helmets', in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development".

Similarly, on Tuesday, 5 December, in the morning, agenda item 39, "Law of the sea", will be considered together with sub-item (c) of agenda item 96, "Sustainable use and conservation of the marine living resources of the high seas".

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*